













**COMMUNICATING THROUGH  
LETTERS AND REPORTS**



# **Communicating Through Letters and Reports**

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# Preface

## To Teachers and Students:

We are grateful to the many teachers, students, and businessmen who used *Writing Business Letters* in the first edition (1955) and the revised edition (1959). Their comments have been most encouraging and helpful to us in revising for this book.

Many of them have said, in effect, "We like the spirit, style, plan, and special teaching and learning aids of *Writing Business Letters*." The spirit, style, and aids we have tried to retain. The plan, however, is altered extensively.

Because of increasing emphasis on the communication process and semantics, we have included a chapter by that name. We have also included short treatments of the three communication procedures other than writing: listening, reading, and speaking. We make no pretense to complete coverage of these three, for this is a book devoted primarily and fundamentally to helping people to improve their written business communications—that part of the communication process on which most people feel the greatest need for help.

Since letters and reports present the major writing problems of most people, the book is appropriately called *Communicating Through Letters and Reports*. As the new title suggests, the treatment of report writing has been expanded. To simplify and condense the treatment of letters, we have reduced the emphasis on types by grouping them and emphasizing basic plans or patterns of any good informative, expository, and persuasive writing.

The last third (approximately) of the book is a compact but detailed discussion of the problems a report writer faces. Though concise, it is comprehensive enough to serve as the text for any college course devoted primarily to writing reports.

Students and teachers of college courses in correspondence, in reports, and in combinations of the two will find the book easily adaptable to varying standards and student abilities. By attention to only the major principles and the easier problems, high-school students of average ability can use the book effectively. By attention to all the refinements and the more difficult problems, the Phi Beta Kappas of our best universities will find it among their most challenging texts.

**To Students (in and out of School):**

In learning anything as complex as writing superior letters and reports, you need instruction in PRINCIPLE, then ILLUSTRATION, and finally PRACTICE in applying the principles. Accordingly, after the chapter on the communications process and semantics, this book presents in four chapters what we consider to be the basic tests applicable to all business letters and to most other forms of business writing. If you go no further, you will have a fundamental concept of the appearance, language and style, tone, and psychology of effective business letters.

For more detailed analysis and application, the remainder of the treatment of correspondence shows you how to handle your business letters functionally according to three basic plans: good-news, disappointing, and persuasive messages. We believe this presentation facilitates teaching and learning. Though the book presents analyses and examples of inquiries, replies, orders, acknowledgments, credits, collections, sales, and applications, the presentation is not in that order nor is the emphasis on specific letter types. As you read through the book, you will see the fundamentals reillustrated and reapplied in the many illustrations.

Some of the illustrations are modifications of good letters and reports written by businessmen. As most businessmen and teachers of business writing know, however, even comparatively good business letters that go through the mail do not serve well as textbook illustrations. Along with their good points, they usually contain defects attributable to carelessness, pressure of time, the writers' temporary lapses, or lack of training. For illustrations, therefore, we have carefully selected actual business letters and then edited beyond merely changing names of companies, products, and individuals. In many instances we have written our own. We are fully aware, however, that the perfect letter never has been and never will be written.

Writing *perfect* letters or reports is next to impossible for all of us. Writing even *good* ones does not just come naturally to most. If you are content to write them as many *are* written, instead of as they *should* be, you will gain little or nothing from studying this book (or any other book or course on writing). But with a concentrated effort to improve, you probably can learn to write superior ones.

Having studied the principles and seen them illustrated, you can then make the principles stick in your mind (and thus make their application habitual) by putting them to use in working out selected problems from the many given at the ends of parts. The ample number and the variety of problems (many of them in a new, more suc-

cinct style) allow the selection to fit your interests, abilities, and desired emphasis.

Please remember, however, that this book is not a dictionary, formula book, or cookbook to be followed blindly. Your aim should be thoughtful consideration of principles for use in the creation of your own original writing rather than slavish imitation of textbook models, which often leads to inappropriate copy. You should learn and follow the *principles illustrated, not the wording* of the illustrations.

Likewise the check lists, a special feature of this book, are intended as thought-starters rather than thought-stopping rules to be followed blindly. They are summary reminders of points about the particular kind of letter under discussion, not formulas for writing or strait jackets on it. They do *not* mean that all the points discussed earlier about a kind of letter and summarized in a check list are applicable to every letter of that general class. Thoughtful consideration of a point in a check list will quickly tell you whether the point is applicable to your particular letter problem, but ignoring the lists will frequently lead to omission of important points; and slavish following of a list will often lead to inappropriate contents in a letter. Hence, when used properly, the check lists can help you produce better letters, help teachers to mark student shortcomings quickly, and thus help you to see where you went wrong.

Besides the special feature of the check lists, you'll notice throughout the book that we have thrown overboard much conventional thinking about textbook writing. For example, we have chosen to address you directly instead of writing impersonally. To us, this you-and-we style is better because (1) this is a book of instruction from us to you, and the natural way to write it is to talk with you; (2) through reading such style you will absorb better stylistic practices to be applied in your own writing.

As another example, we have used contractions where they're natural and where they increase readability.

And for still another example, we have not stressed "correctness" as one of the requirements of letter and report style. For one reason, students using this book should have successfully completed a previous course in college writing; to repeat much of it would only kill their interest in the functional writing discussed here. For those who need some review, a teacher can best give it by marking their papers with specific references to Appendix A, which provides ample material on the most likely shortcomings.

Our main reason, however, is that we think "inconspicuousness" is a more appropriate term than "correctness." We know that errors in punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar, and word choice are undesirable because they distract the reader, slow him up,

cause him to lose respect for the writer, and sometimes confuse him. On the other hand, we know that on many points there is considerable disagreement as to what is "correct," that language scholars and wide-awake teachers of writing have discarded many old grammar-book rules, that discreet use of so-called "slang" is sometimes effective, and that clearness, naturalness, appropriateness, and simplicity are more important than a purist's "correctness" in getting your message across to your reader. For instance, some people will no doubt criticize us for saying ". . . to pop the question," but we think that is an effective expression.

From the many businessmen we have talked and worked with, from thousands of articles in business magazines, from the many textbooks on the subject, from associating with many other teachers on the job, through long and active membership in the American Business Writing Association (including terms as president), and from college students and business people we have taught, we have learned much about letters and reports and effective ways for teaching people to write better ones. We have brought together and modified what we have learned from a combined fifty years of experience. And we have contributed our own ideas. In studying this one concise book, then, you learn what we think is the best that has been thought and said about letter and report writing through the years. By learning its suggestions, you can improve your letters and reports.

J. H. MENNING  
C. W. WILKINSON

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# Why Study Letter Writing?

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"ANYONE CAN Write Letters!" is the forceful statement tossed off by some people, even people who should know better. To realize the fallacy of such a broad statement, they have only to recall the times they have struggled over how to get a concession or how to please an irate customer. Almost anyone *can* write letters (and everyone does)—but are they good ones? Unless the writer has some training in letter writing and gives some thought and planning to his letters, they are not likely to be.

The main reason you should study letter writing depends on two facts:

1. You are almost certain to write many business letters during the rest of your life, regardless of the kind of work you do.
2. By studying the principles and practicing the skills and arts of letter writing, you can learn to write letters that will more frequently bring the desired results.

The letter is the most common form of written communication for managing business affairs, and everybody has business affairs to manage. Whether you fail or succeed in managing many of those affairs will depend on whether you send an ordinary letter or a really good one. Through systematic study and practice you can learn to write good ones.

## Other Things You Learn

You will also learn some principles of practical psychology that will enable you to get along better professionally and socially with other people.

When you improve your ability to write clear, concise, persuasive, and natural English (which *is* the desirable language of business), you will also gain accuracy and naturalness in phrasing anything else you have to write or to speak.

You will also get a further insight into the ways of the business world. Through your study of letters you will learn about practices in getting people to buy, handling orders, granting and refusing credit, making collections, adjusting claims, and selecting employees.

You will also learn how to save time and money on letter writing.

## **2 COMMUNICATING THROUGH LETTERS AND REPORTS**

As a good letter writer, you can often write one letter to settle a business transaction that would require two or three from an untrained writer. By using form letters and form paragraphs you can cut down on letter costs when the form message will do the job. When, however, you have situations requiring individual letters, you will recognize them and know better than to waste money on forms. You will also be able to dictate or write the necessary individualized letters more rapidly because you will have gained the self-confidence that comes from knowing how to tackle a job. You will write freely and effectively the letters you *have* to write and the many others you *should* write.

Perhaps most important of all, you will realize that every letter you write is an item in your over-all public relations—and will try to make each win, instead of lose, friends.

### **Letter Volume and Costs**

When you consider that the New York General Post Office alone handles about 34 million pieces of mail on business days, you can understand how the editors of *The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising* (June, 1962, pp. 22 ff.) predicted 62 billion pieces of mail handled by the U.S. Post Office for 1962, 70 billion for 1963, and 90 billion for 1970. Pessimists may question these predictions in view of increasing postal rates, but increases in the past have had little effect on mail volume.

If we accept the ratio of 2-to-1 for first- and third-class mailings that has appeared in U.S. Post Office annual reports in recent years, that means for 1962, 44 billion first-class letters that went through the mail—an average of well over 200 for every person in the United States. This average includes children, housewives, day laborers, farmers, and many other groups who write fewer than the average number of letters. Business and professional men write many more than the average. And remember that they also send out billions of third-class mailings (roughly 22, if the foregoing estimates are correct), practically all of which are business letters.

All these letters cost money, too. A businessman can send processed third-class mailings in large quantities, enjoying the advantages of reduced postage rates, for costs varying from 10 to 50 cents. But for first-class letters, when he figures the dictator's and transcriber's time, the stationery, the stamps, and the allocation of equipment, storage, and space expenses, he must admit that the early-1960's Dartnell estimate of \$1.83 is realistic.<sup>1</sup> These estimates have climbed from 75 cents in the late 1930's to 91 cents in 1953 to \$1.70 in 1957 to \$1.83 in

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<sup>1</sup> The astute and highly readable Miss Sylvia Porter in one of her syndicated columns maintained that this figure is far too low for letters written by executives.

1961. Even if you assume that only half the first-class letters are business letters, you're forced to admit that a \$40 billion cost figure is not far off. And if you further assume even a modest estimate of 10 cents for mass third-class mailings, you have to add another \$2-\$2.5 billion to that impressive figure. Letter writing is big business.

Most important, isn't it likely that you will be one in a business or professional group that writes more than the average number of letters? And that you will be at least partially responsible for effective control of this high-cost, but often necessary, way of doing business?

### **Letter Advantages**

When you consider the advantages of doing business by letter, it is easy to see why businessmen write so many letters and spend so much money on them. Despite the cost of a letter, it is often the most economical way to transact business. You can't go far (not even across town, if you figure your time and traveling expense) or talk far by long-distance or say much in a telegram for under \$2. But for that money you can put your message in a letter and send it anywhere in the country, or almost anywhere in the world.

Even if you do talk to the other fellow, you do not have a written record, as you do if you follow the almost universal business practice of making a copy of your letter (with either carbon or film). The fact that a written contract can be made by a letter and its answer is one reason why the letter often replaces personal calls and telephone calls even in one's own city.

Still another advantage is that the letter can be prepared by its writer and read by its receiver at their most convenient times. Thus it can get by receptionists and secretaries many times when a telephone call or a personal call cannot. Moreover, the reader usually gives it his full attention without raising partially considered objections and without interruption. That is a decided psychological advantage.

### **Emphasis in Business**

When executives began to realize how much letters cost, how important letters and reports are to the smooth operation of their firms, and how few of their employees were capable writers, many of them started training programs and correspondence-control programs. At General Electric, Westinghouse, Southern Pacific, Marshall Field, the New York Life Insurance Company, and the big mail-order houses (Montgomery Ward, Spiegel's, and Sears Roebuck), to mention only a few of the leaders, such programs have demonstrated the economy and efficiency resulting from improved correspondence. Even these firms, however, prefer to hire people who can already write rather than train them on company time.

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A frequent question in employment interviews and in inquiry letters to professors concerns the ability of college graduates to do such writing. An applicant who presents evidence that he can write good letters and reports becomes a favored applicant for nearly any job.

### **Emphasis in Schools**

Many of the executives who are aware of the importance of good letters are graduates of the few schools where instruction in business writing has been given since early in the 1900's. These business leaders are the main reason why today in the majority of respectable colleges and universities literally thousands of students are studying and practicing how to write more effectively for business. Without exception, surveys by such organizations as Delta Sigma Pi, The American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business, and the American Business Writing Association have confirmed the high regard of former students for the work.

Business letter-writing instructors frequently hear student comments such as "I learned more English in letter writing than in any other course I ever had!" or "*Everybody* should be required to take a course in letter writing!" or "This course is good preparation for living in general."

### **Common Misconceptions**

Yet some people—mostly for lack of information—do not respect even university work in business writing. Courses in letter writing are sometimes thought of as being merely about letter forms. Though that is a part, it is only a small part (less than 5 per cent of the space in this book).

One even hears the idea stated that students of letter writing learn the trite, wordy, and nearly meaningless expressions so common at the beginnings and endings of letters written by some untrained businessmen. Actually, you learn to write naturally, concisely, and clearly, to take care of the business without beating about the bush, and to end letters when you are through—without wasting first and last sentences saying nothing.

Still others think that in the study of letter writing the emphasis is on high-pressure techniques (almost to the unethical point) and tricks and gadgets. Just the opposite is true. In drawing on the findings of psychologists, we are NOT advocating that you attempt to *manipulate* or outsmart your reader in sly, almost unethical fashion. Use of the findings of psychology is good or bad depending on the intent of the user. The intent of the writer toward his reader should always be morally and ethically proper. Our intent is to help you write acceptable things (determined by you) in an acceptable way

(determined by your reader) more likely to convince your reader of the legitimacy and the attractiveness (or soundness) of your proposal or position.

You may hear it said that letter writing is "just a practical study." It certainly is practical, for the ability to write good business letters is useful. But it is also a cultural study because its primary purposes are the development of (1) your ability to maintain pleasant relations with your fellow men and (2) your language effectiveness.

### **Why the High Regard for Letter Writing?**

One of the reasons why courses in business letter writing have found increasing favor with students—as well as with executives and college administrators—is that it is a blend of the cultural and the practical. When Professor George Burton Hotchkiss of New York University said, "It isn't a language, it is a point of view," he did not intend to underestimate the value of effective use of the language in business writing; he wanted to give proper emphasis to the necessity for psychology and salesmanship.

The business correspondent writes to an individual for a definite, practical purpose. Emphatically, he must write with the same exactness as other good writers. Unlike them, however, he does not seek to entertain his reader (or to please himself with his purple passages and "deathless prose"). He wants to arrange an interview for a job or a sales demonstration, to secure the appropriate signatures on a contract, to get prospects to visit a showroom, or to secure the agreement of a customer to a delay or a substitution. *Action* is usually his goal. Letter writing is partially a study of probable or estimated human *reaction* as the basis for securing the desired *action*. Since the quality of persuasion is more important to the letter writer than to most writers, a good knowledge of practical psychology is essential in his work.

The good correspondent must learn to do more than just sell goods and services. In his handling of claim, adjustment, credit, and collection letters, he learns tact, patience, consideration of the other fellow, a necessarily optimistic attitude, and the value of saying things pleasantly and positively instead of negatively. These are the reasons why you can expect to enjoy more successful social and business relations with other people after a thorough, conscientious, and repeated analysis and application of the principles of good letter writing.

Furthermore, the good letter writer must learn to be concise, interesting, and easy to follow if he is to hold his reader. For reasons of courtesy a listener will bear with a long-winded, dull, or unclear conversation. He will even ask for explanations. But the reader of a letter feels no such courtesy toward it. The good letter writer therefore

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edits his work carefully so that he will phrase ideas more effectively in writing than he can in talking. In conversation one can cushion the effect or shade the meaning of his words with the twinkle of his eye, the inflection of his voice, or the gesture of his hand. As he proceeds, he can adjust and adapt his presentation according to the reaction he observes in his listener. With far less chance of failure, he can get along by "doin' what comes naturally." The letter writer has no such chance to observe the effects of the first part of his presentation and adapt the last part accordingly. He must therefore learn to *foresee* the reader's reaction all the way through. That requires more thorough knowledge of practical psychology, more preliminary analysis of what his reader is like, more careful planning of his message, and more careful phrasing of his thoughts than in oral communications.

Such editing establishes good habits of expression—habits which are carried over to the spoken message. This is the reason we say that you will learn to talk better if you learn to write better. It is also the reason we say that in learning to write effective letters you will learn to do a better job of writing anything else you have to write.

### **Art, Science, or Skill?**

The use of the language—in clear, concise adaptation to one's readers so that they can absorb the message with the least amount of effort and the greatest amount of pleasant reaction—is an art. Several generations of business writers have shown that the proper language for business in general and for letters in particular is just plain good English. Though it is more concise and more precise, it is neither more nor less formal than the conversational language of people for whom letters are intended.

Good business letters are also the result of a conscious use of principles which have evolved since the turn of the century. It would be exaggeration to claim that business letter writing is a science; but it would be folly to ignore the experiences of prominent business writers who have experimented with letters for over fifty years. As a result of their experiences, they have given us a near-scientific framework of principles as a starting point. Though many of these principles have not been demonstrated with scientific exactness, they have taken a great deal of the speculative out of letter writing. We can therefore approach the writing of business letters with a pretty good knowledge of what good letter-writing principles are and *when*, *where*, and *how* to apply them.

Writing good business letters, then, is neither exclusively an art nor exclusively a science. Yet it is certainly more than what we frequently call a skill. It involves thinking of a very complex kind:

analyzing both a situation and a reader, then using good judgment in applying knowledge of English, business, and psychology.

## **Summary**

In studying letter writing, then, you not only learn how to get the desired results from the many letters you will have to write. You will also get a greater understanding of people and how to influence them, an increased facility in the use of language (both oral and written), a more thorough knowledge of business practices and ethics, and a resultant confidence in yourself.

You may want to make a career of business letters. Correspondence supervisors, letter consultants, and direct-mail specialists have found it highly rewarding. But in *any* business, industry, or profession—as well as in your private life—your ability to write a good letter will be a vital tool and a powerful factor in your eventual success.

# Why Study Report Writing?

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NO ONE, to our knowledge, has ever said, "ANYONE can write reports!" Business and industrial people would probably deny such a statement even more emphatically than teachers and students. A basic fact about report writing, as about letter writing, is that most people who have not studied it do it rather poorly.

The basic language of good reports differs little from the standard English used in any good functional writing; but good report writing requires the use of certain supplementary communication devices rarely learned except in report-writing courses. The forms of reports deserve some attention, but they are easily learned. Putting the words on paper, however, is only a part of the problem.

If you consider the meaning of *communicating through reports*, you'll realize that *preparation* is involved. And preparation means making a plan, getting the material or evidence (research), organizing for meaning and coherence, analyzing this material to arrive at a solution to the problem, and *then* writing up your analysis clearly and concisely.

Study and practice in writing reports *can* help you when you're a student. They *will* help you when you're a job candidate and when you're on the job.

## Help When You're a Student

Learning to write a good report can help you to earn better grades. The increased familiarity with sources of information—not just published sources and how to find them in the libraries, but also methods of securing original data—enables you to do research more efficiently for papers required in other courses. (Reports are certainly not like term papers in objective or in some phases of treatment, but the research behind them is similar.) Documenting is also similar in the two. And certainly you'll profit from the carry-over of organization principles and improved language ability. For these reasons, students who have studied and applied report-writing principles usually earn better grades on term papers in advanced courses, hence better grades in the courses.

Certainly if you go on to graduate school, you will find that your work on report writing has been about your best preparation. When you have to write the many long research papers, and a thesis, you will already know how to collect, organize, and interpret data and to document your writing. Indeed you will probably join the many graduate students we have heard make comments to the effect, "Thanks to my course in report writing, I know how to go about writing course papers and my thesis."

### **Help When You're a Job Candidate**

If you apply for a job instead of going to graduate school, you'll find that business firms put a premium on the services of people who can write well. Because reports play such a prominent role in most businesses (for reasons explained in pp. 441-43), prospective employers often give preference to those applicants who have had training in report writing. They prefer to hire people who can already write reports rather than to spend vast sums of money on company-sponsored report-writing courses (as hundreds of companies find it necessary to do for people who have not had such preparation).

One director of a collegiate employment bureau reports that an increasing number of employee recruiters from business and industry ask, as one of the first questions, what grade a prospective employee earned in report writing. (Note that they assume students have had such training.) These men apparently regard the report-writing performance of the student in his college course as an indication of his ability to do something that is important to their companies.

### **Help When You're on the Job**

If you are surprised by the interest of *prospective employers* in your ability to write reports, you may be even more surprised by their interest as *employers*. The reports which a trainee on a new job is usually required to submit not only help to determine the division of the company where he will be assigned; they often determine whether he will be retained by the company at the end of the training period. Even after a man is a full-fledged employee, management studies his reports not only for information and ideas in solution to problems but for evidence of the employee's ability to communicate clearly, quickly, and easily. To his immediate superior, an employee will often report orally (speaking and listening), but the immediate superior is not usually the one who makes the final decisions about an employee's salary increases and promotions. Those who do may consider the immediate superior's evaluation, but they often consider equally important the *written* reports of the employee being evaluated. The reports he writes are frequently regarded as the best—and

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sometimes they are the only—indication of how well he is doing his job.

Your study of report writing, as you see, can help your grades in school, your chances at a desirable job, and your effectiveness and status in your career.

## **Part One**

# **THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS AND SEMANTIC PRINCIPLES**



# The Communication Process and Semantic Principles

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The Communication Process

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## THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

WHETHER you are talking or writing, listening or reading, you are doing one half (sending or receiving) of the two-way process of communication.

Essential to this process are symbols—usually words. (We are not concerned here with signals and other forms of nonverbal communication.) When a person has an idea which he wishes to convey to somebody else, he cannot just hand over the idea; he necessarily uses symbols of some kind. In oral communication, these are sounds; written, they become words and figures. The first step in communication, then, is the sender's formulating his ideas into symbols.

These sounds or written symbols do not communicate, however, until they are transmitted by some channel from the sender to the receiver.

Then to complete the communication process, the receiver has to interpret those symbols back into an idea in essentially the same way the sender had to formulate the idea into symbols.

This simple-sounding three-step process of symbolizing, transmitting, and interpreting nevertheless involves many possibilities of breakdown of communication. If the person with the idea or concept has not learned to talk or is mute, or his would-be receiver is

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deaf, they obviously cannot communicate orally. But these are problems for the speech and hearing therapists. If he does not know how to write, or his receiver to read, they cannot use written symbols. But these are problems for the teachers of young children. Similarly, we leave to the Post Office Department and the electrical engineers in telephone, telegraph, radio, and TV companies the manifold problems of transmitting symbols from sender to receiver with a minimum of interference (called "noise" by communications specialists).

But if the person with an idea has not learned the English language (a system of symbols) well enough for the expression of his idea according to the system, or if his receiver cannot interpret according to the system, they cannot communicate effectively—and they are our problem.

These two steps of formulating concepts into meaningful, standard symbols (frequently referred to as encoding) and interpreting the symbols (decoding) are the two major points of communication breakdown. Since we are concerned primarily with writing (one form of the initiating phase of communication), we deal mostly with encoding; but many of the causes of communication breakdown involve decoding too.

### SOME BASIC SEMANTIC PRINCIPLES<sup>1</sup>

Fundamental to communication is this general principle: THE SYMBOLS USED MUST STAND FOR ESSENTIALLY THE SAME THING IN THE MINDS OF THE SENDER AND THE RECEIVER.

Just as our money is a medium of exchange for goods and services, our language has developed as a medium of exchange for ideas. Though the unit values of both may change with time and circumstances, at a given time and in a given set of circumstances the values of both are pretty well set. You therefore cannot pay a bill for 35 cents by offering a quarter, and you cannot convey the idea of localism by offering the word *colloquialism*. Good diction—choice of the proper word to represent the sender's idea—is therefore a minimum essential in oral or written communication.

The diction problem is complicated by the fact that the sender's chosen words must also be in the receiver's vocabulary. You can't use

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography of semantics is extensive, and the books vary greatly in difficulty. If you want to read further on the subject, we suggest that you see the following books in the order listed: William V. Haney, *Communication: Patterns and Incidents*, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Ill., 1960. Bess Sonnel, *The Humanity of Words: a Primer of Semantics*, World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1958. Stuart Chase, *Power of Words*, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1953. Irving J. Lee, *Handling Barriers in Communication*, Harper, New York, 1957. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1949. Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, Institute of General Semantics, Lakeville, Conn., 1948.

perfectly good Greek to communicate to a person who knows only English. You can't use the highly technical language of medicine, law, engineering, insurance, or accounting to communicate with people who don't know the terms. They're all Greek to the non-specialist. If you want to communicate, then, you must estimate your receiver's vocabulary and restrict your own accordingly. In general you are justified in using unusual words or the special language of any field only if you're sure all your receivers know the terms or you explain them as you go along.

Even words which properly name a broad group of things for both sender and receiver, however, may still not reproduce in the mind of the receiver the sender's specific concept. If you write *machine* while thinking "typewriter," your reader is likely to miss your intent by envisioning a calculator, a mimeograph, or some other machine. To communicate well, then, a sender must use words specific enough for the necessary precision.

Even then, words alone are far from the whole of this system of symbols we call the English language; the way they're put together, punctuated, and sometimes even spelled, can make a vast difference. A bear does not have a bare skin. To a reader who follows the English system of placing modifiers as close as possible to the things they modify, "Only three men passed the first screening" does not mean the same as "Three men passed the first screening only." To the reader who knows anything about the punctuation of essential and nonessential clauses, "The prices which are higher than those last year for the same items are simply too high" does not mean the same as "The prices, which are higher than those last year for the same items, are simply too high." To get the right idea, the reader has to assume that the writer didn't know how to handle participles when he wrote, "Having hung by the heels in the 30-degree temperature over night, we found the venison made an excellent breakfast." That writer tried to pass a lead nickel in our medium of exchange, the English language. He needs to learn the fundamental principle: The symbols used must stand for essentially the same thing in the minds of the sender and the receiver.

Here are eight specific principles that might be considered sub-heads of the general principle.

1. *A statement is never the whole story.* Even in reporting the simplest event, you omit some details which another reporter might well have told. Usually you report only on the macroscopic level, omitting additional details that could be added if you made microscopic or submicroscopic examinations of all the objects involved. But you also omit much of the macroscopic. Even if you think you cover the standard Who, Where, When, Why, What, and How, another reporter could easily add more details and more specifics on

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each of them. By way of illustration, consider how infrequently you see, in other reports, certain details that are standard in police reports of traffic accidents: mental and physical conditions of the driver(s), weather conditions, condition of the roadway, etc.

Whether you are sending or receiving the facts and arguments in a court case, in a report leading to a multimillion-dollar decision, in a sales letter, or in some other communication, you do not have the whole story. Even the witness who takes an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth never does; to additional questions, he could always tell more. Even an application letter of ten pages does not tell the whole life story of the applicant.

This concept of inevitable incompleteness—often called “abstracting” and defined as calling attention to some details while neglecting others—is basic in the thinking of semanticists. The International Society for General Semantics has therefore titled its journal *ETC.*, thus stressing Korzybski’s suggestion that writers use the abbreviation as a reminder and warning that their statements are incomplete.

The importance of the incompleteness concept stems from the dangers of ignoring it—the “allness” fallacy. If you consider only parts of a whole and judge the whole, you’re in danger of the logical fallacy of hasty generalization and unsound conclusions like those of the six blind men who each described an elephant after feeling only one part. If you forget that you do not have all the facts, you are in danger of closing your mind to other facts and points of view. You may think of your way as the only way. You thus act on the basis of preconception and may become unteachable, intolerant, dogmatic, and arrogant. Recognizing that you never have the whole story, on the other hand, helps to keep you open-minded, tolerant, and humble.

2. *Perception involves both the perceived and the perceiver.* Since you are never telling or considering the whole story, you are *selecting*, from all the things that might be or have been said, *those which seem to you important*. What you say about a thing or how you react to it, then, often depends as much on you as on what the thing really is.

Both your judgment of what is important to select and your conclusions based on selected facts are influenced by the kind of person you are. And you are what you are (different from anybody else) because of different inherited traits and different experiences. Your special interests, values, tastes, and attitudes will naturally cause what you say about a thing or how you react to a statement to differ from what anybody else would say or how he would react. In effect you are a special filter. Another filter (person) with different characteristics would filter out different things. Hence neither you nor he can be strictly objective. When we claim to be objective, then, we are de-

luding ourselves—and others if they believe us. And when we expect others to be objective or to see things exactly as we do, we are simply being unrealistic.

A famous French movie aptly illustrates the point that the background of a person influences his decision—sometimes more than the factual evidence. The movie gives a life history (selected, of course) of each juror in an important trial and shows how the different backgrounds produced different votes in the jury room when all jurors had heard and seen exactly the same evidence. Other illustrations may be more readily available in newspaper accounts of court decisions determined by the prejudices of the judges, or even in different grades for equally good school work because of teacher favoritism or the teacher's special background, attitudes, and emphases.

Thorough recognition of the point—that in terms of the other fellow's background and point of view he may be just as near right as you are in terms of yours—can go a long way toward preventing disagreements by making you cautious about using *is* dogmatically. When you use *is* to connect a noun and an adjective ("Henry Smith is honest") you are saying that the quality "honesty" belongs to or exists in Smith. This predicate-adjective construction, using what some semanticists call the "is of predication," actually misrepresents reality and seems dogmatic to another person who disagrees because he either knows different facts about Smith or defines honesty differently. If you remember that your thinking about Smith is influenced by what you know about him (not *all* the facts) *and* by what honesty means to you (probably somewhat different from what it means to the other fellow), you are more likely to say less dogmatically "Henry Smith seems to me . . ."—and to avoid an argument or even a fight.

Two subpoints about the perceiver and the perceived deserve special attention.

*a)* By the psychological principle of projection, we are inclined to attribute to others our own characteristics and feelings. People who pay their bills are inclined to assume that others will too. The reverse is also true. A credit man—and anybody else who wants to avoid being duped—needs to realize that his views of things depend heavily on the kind of person he is and that others may have different views. The wise credit man will use the statistician's rather than the psychologist's meaning of *projection*: he will get information about a credit applicant's past reputation for paying bills, project the trend line, and decide to approve or disapprove the application according to where the projection points.

*b)* Psychologists also tell us that we are inclined to resist the unpleasant. Facts and ideas that go contrary to our preconceptions, wishful thinkings, and other selfish interests are among the unpleasant

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things we must face because they provoke us to change our comfortable old ways. A semantically sound person will therefore try to avoid the comfortable but antisemantic idea in "Don't confuse me with facts; my mind's made up."

*3. Statements or actions based on whims, feelings, imaginings, preconceptions, customs, traditions, and platitudes are questionable.* Though you never get all the relevant facts, and though you can never be strictly objective in evaluating those you do get, you should get what facts you can and evaluate them as objectively as you can. You need not give up and use the excuse "all or nothing." Ignoring observable facts will almost certainly lead you into conflict with reality.

A reasonable approach to problem solving involves two beginning questions: (1) What are the facts? (2) How do you know? Because of the importance of instantaneous response in some simple situations, we have certain reflex mechanisms (for eyeblink, sneezing, etc.) that do not involve thinking. But you are courting real trouble if you make reflex-like responses to complex situations. Fortunately, as situations become more complex, the allowable time for decision becomes greater and the reactions become voluntary. A reasonable person will use some of that time to collect and consider at least some of the significant facts. As some semanticists say, he will look at the territory before drawing a map; he will be extensionally instead of intensionally oriented. That is, he will look outside his own skin for some facts instead of relying wholly on his internal feelings and cogitations. To do otherwise is to act on prejudices, preconceptions, and whims.

While considering the collected data, you need to ask "How do you know that this information is reliable?" Many platitudes, prejudices, customs, and the like are based on assumptions that simply do not line up with reality. Even well "established" teachings of science are often discarded after the discovery of new evidence by such men as Harvey, Pasteur, and Reed. The atom that could not be split, according to "authoritative" books not many years ago, has been split. More recently, discoveries in outer space are bringing into question many of the "established" principles meteorologists have followed for years. (Perhaps we can look forward to more reliable weather forecasts.)

If scientists—who generally pride themselves on being careful in collecting data and in drawing conclusions, and who usually have good equipment—can be so wrong and so dogmatic as they have been on some of these things, should we all not learn the lesson of humility and caution? Should we not all be careful about the adequacy and the reliability of what appears to be information, and about the validity of our conclusions? Surely we should all see the dangers of

accepting information from old books. And the disagreements among "authorities" in almost every field should warn us to question authoritative statements or at least to check them as best we can against our own experience. Even then, reasonable humility would seem to warn that we rarely "prove" anything well enough to justify saying such and such *is true*.

Incidentally, our best modern scientists have just about learned their lessons. They now admit that they usually deal with probabilities rather than certainties.

If the careful research methods and conclusion making of scientists still lead to questionable results and probable truths, what of the statements of people who do not bother to get the facts at all and, without thinking or checking, act on the bases of prejudices, pre-conceptions, whims, etc.? A semanticist would at least warn you to take what they say with a few grains of semantic salt.

4. *Facts, inferences, and value judgments are not the same thing.* If you have ever heard a court trial, you have probably heard a judge order some testimony stricken from the record because the witness was stating his opinions or conclusions (inferences) rather than restricting himself to what he had seen, heard, felt, etc. (sense data). The fact that our legal procedures accept as evidence the inferences of experts only, reflects society's faith in sense data and its lack of faith in inferences unless made by people specially qualified to make them.

You see why when you consider the nature of sense data, inferences, and value judgments. Sense data usually approach certainty, inferences vary all the way from near certainty to slight probability (usually depending mainly on how many verifiable facts form the basis for them), and value judgments are nearly always debatable. For example you see a good friend in a men's store on December 20. She tells you that she wants to buy a tie for her husband Joe and asks your help in selecting a pretty one. After she disapproves three that you suggest and then you disapprove three she is considering, you leave her to make her own choice because you see that the two of you don't agree on what is a pretty tie (value judgments). On December 27 you see Joe wearing a tie that looks new and looks like one of the three Jane suggested and you disapproved. More courteously than sincerely, you say "That is a pretty tie Jane bought you." [Note the dogmatic *is*, discussed in Item 2 above.] Joe says that he hates to be so disagreeable but he thinks it's ugly and Jane didn't buy it. You see that your value judgment matches Joe's better than Jane's; and when Joe tells you that a friend gave him the tie, you see that you took a calculated risk with your inference—and lost. [Note that to make this decision you have to assume that Joe is telling the truth.]

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Both the general experience of almost any adult and the results of many tests show rather convincingly that two or more eyewitnesses of an event often disagree considerably on what happened. Nevertheless, people generally agree with the courts in trusting "factual reporting" more than inferences. Apparently the reason lies in Item 2 above: sense data are believed to be more reliable than inferences, which are too likely to get distorted in being filtered through the personality of the one drawing the inferences.

Not even the courts rule out inferences completely, however. Judges make them, and jurors' votes are pure inferences. As a matter of practicality we make and act on inferences all the time. We have to. We cannot always know with the near-certainty of sense data; many times we have to act on inferences and thus take calculated risks. Even calculated risks, however, are based on *some* data and are safer than wild guesses or hunches.

The danger in inferences is not in acting on them but in acting on them *as if* they were completely reliable. By recognizing the risks we are taking when acting on inferences, or even on hunches, we can reduce the danger considerably because we will not be so surprised by otherwise unexpected turns of events.

To avoid deluding ourselves and others with whom we communicate, then, we will do well to remind ourselves and forewarn others of the *bases* on which our statements rest. A statement, like a ladder, is no more secure than its foundation. As communicators we owe ourselves and others the clear indication of which statements are based on verifiable fact or on sense data, which are inferences (along with the verifiable data on which they are based), and which statements are value judgments. Our readers and listeners have a right to know about the foundations if they are going to risk their necks on our ladders.

Still we need not make ourselves as ridiculous as the skeptical farmer who remarked "At least on this side" when he was asked to observe that black sheep in the pasture. He did seem a bit ridiculous, but he was no sucker.

5. *No two things are exactly alike.* Even things so much alike that they appear identical to the naked eye always reveal differences under close inspection. To be absolutely precise in naming things, then, would require a different word or other symbol for each. Obviously such precision is impractical—and unnecessary for most purposes.

General words, naming whole groups of things similar in one or more aspects that concern us, help us in classifications. Thus we can save words and time by talking about, or otherwise treating, somewhat similar things collectively instead of individually. If what we say or do with the group applies equally well to all members of the group, we thus operate efficiently.

Trouble arises quickly, however, when we group things on the basis of a few similarities and then act as if all things in the group were identical in all ways. Such a situation exists when colleges try to treat all freshmen alike because all are first-year students, ignoring the great variety of interests and abilities in the individuals.

Some ugly results of ignoring differences and stressing similarities are faulty categorizing (or labeling or pigeonholing) and faulty analogy making. Thus we get the unsound, unyielding, and prejudicial stereotyping so often seen in fiction. Not all cowboys, politicians, professors, businessmen, delinquent credit customers, Russians, or Negroes are alike—though they may have some similarities that justify the grouping *for a particular purpose*. No one of the groupings is sound for *all* purposes, however, because each group involves differing individuals. Sound thinking requires recognition of the differences and variation of one's attitudes toward and treatment of the individuals accordingly.

As a communicator you can do several things to help solve the problem. For one thing, you can *use symbols (usually words) that are specific enough for your purposes*. When you do mean your statement to apply equally to a number of somewhat similar things (say all new customers), be efficient and use the group name instead of handling each separately; but surely you should not lump together for similar handling as "delinquent accounts" the good customer who got behind because of a temporary misfortune and the marginal risk who tried to skip by moving and leaving no address. And if what you say applies only to typewriters, don't say machines. If it applies only to portables, don't say typewriters. If it applies only to Royal portables, don't just say portables.

Accepting the premise of uniqueness, and recognizing the fallacy of identity, some semanticists recommend using the "Which Index." To distinguish which individual they are referring to in a group name, they suggest using subscript numbers after the name, typewriter<sub>1</sub> being different from typewriter<sub>2</sub>. Carried to extreme, this system is as impractical as the limitless vocabulary necessary to give each individual thing a name; but used in moderation, it can help. In either case, a little use of it will remind you of an important point: If significant differences exist in the group named, make clear which members of the groups you are talking about. Usually that means using a more specific name or otherwise limiting the group down to where your statement is valid. "Businessmen who do such and such things are unethical" is quite different from "Businessmen are unethical."

For another thing, you can *consider significant differences along with similarities*. Analogies, similes, and other metaphors pointing to the similarities between two things help greatly in explanations. In-

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deed they become almost necessary, because teaching and learning involve explanation of the unknown in terms of the known. Dictionaries explain words in terms of other words presumably known to the dictionary user. You often hear and read explanations in terms of a football game, which you presumably understand. Because you know English verbs generally go like *stay*, *stayed*, *stayed*, you can usually form the past tense and the past participle of a verb you have just learned. But if the new verb is *think*, the analogy misleads you.

That misleading analogy points to three warnings about using analogies to make them helpful rather than harmful.

a) Since no two things are exactly alike, no analogy can be complete. Though *stay* and *think* are both English verbs, they belong to different classes. Though we speak of synonyms, they are alike only in some ways and are not always interchangeable.

b) Because two or more things always have some differences even when they are largely similar, an analogy never proves anything. The truth may slip through one of the holes that make the difference between the two "analogous" things. Stock-market and weather forecasters often predict certain futures because those results followed similar conditions in the past. But forecasters are often wrong because they have failed to consider significant differences in seemingly similar conditions.

c) In using analogies you must be sure your reader understands the supposedly known side of your analogy. Otherwise you are in the position of one explaining a Russian word in Chinese terms to a person who knows neither language.

6. *Some either-or, black-white classifications are legitimate but most are not.* The question is whether your two-part classifications are mutually exclusive. A person is either married or he is not; there is no middle ground; no one can be both married and not married at the same time. But you cannot say with equal validity that the same person is tall, intelligent, honest, and the like. Where do you draw the line between intelligent and not intelligent, honest and not honest?

You are being true to reality when you use either-or, black-white, two-valued logic for mutually exclusive things—things that cannot both exist at the same time. But most things are continua, with gradations, shadings, or degrees between the extremes. For them you need a "How-much Index." Applying black-white logic to them ignores the gray. It is similar to the false dilemma in logic. And like the false dilemma, it is used especially by the unthinking, the intolerant, and the shysters among us. The results are delusions of self and others, intolerance, and hard feelings if not fights. The person who thinks of himself categorically as a success or a failure, for example, will almost certainly become arrogant or unhappy. The professor who

speaks of his students' papers as the accurate and the interesting implies (probably incorrectly) that the accurate papers are dull and the interesting ones are inaccurate (as if accuracy and interest were mutually exclusive), and that all are therefore bad. He probably has drawn an inaccurate "map of the territory," as some semanticists would say, and probably has incurred the enmity of most of his students.

As a communicator you can do several things to avoid the undesirable consequences of two-valued thinking. First, you must recognize the difference between legitimate (mutually exclusive) two-pole classifications and continua. Then you can use the readily available facilities of English to show the proper gradations in continua. Not only does English contain somewhat similar nouns of varying degrees of specificity and strength, but a large supply of adjectives and adverbs with similar variations. Moreover, the adjectives and adverbs have three standard degrees of comparison like good, better, best and speedily, more speedily, and most speedily. If you still feel the need for better indication of the degree of grayness in a continuum, you can always *add* specific details, as in "Quickly (3.2 seconds) the operator turned the heavy (5-ton) crane around and . . . ."

7. *Things change significantly with time.* Nature works as a dynamic process. As a part of nature, Joe Smith today is not exactly the same as Joe Smith yesterday, much less ten years ago. Significant aspects of a present situation may not have existed in the past and may not continue in the future. To be true to reality, then, you need to consider the date in connection with statements sent or received. Some semanticists refer to this principle as the necessity for the When Index. Ignoring it produces what some call the Frozen Evaluation.

Most universities recognize the point by readmitting students, after specified periods of time, who were dropped for poor scholarship or infraction of rules. Most homes would run more smoothly if parents would recognize that their teen-agers are no longer babies. Ex-convicts would find readjustment to normal living much easier if their neighbors would at least give them a chance to show whether they have changed instead of pinning permanent labels on them. Many blue laws on statute books should be rescinded. We may as well get used to reinterpretations of the Constitution—and to changed usages and new dictionaries of English. Our language is not static. Fighting new English textbooks and new dictionaries (which do not make but merely record current usage) is more futile than fighting City Hall; it's fighting the whole country. One can better spend his time considering the changing values of the dollar before investing too heavily in things like government bonds and endowment insurance payable in fixed amounts ten or twenty years later. Surely a credit man should know that the facts which force him to

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refuse a requested credit arrangement may change in a few months—and should hold open the possibility of reconsidering them. And speakers, writers, listeners, and readers would all be better communicators if they considered more carefully the *time* in connection with many statements.

8. *Words are not identical to the objects they represent.* They are only symbols of concepts that exist only in the mind. They do not have meanings themselves but only the power to represent or evoke meanings in our minds.

Concrete objects react on our various senses to give us our concepts of those things. We then use words to represent those concepts. Only the physical objects are real; our concepts and the symbols (words) to represent them are the first and second levels of abstraction in the Ladder of Abstraction or Structural Differential which semanticists talk about. We can then go on and on up the Ladder of Abstraction through a series of inferential labels or descriptions, each concerned with the preceding level of abstraction.

In this scheme, clearly the names we give are not the things themselves—even names that have referents (concrete, tangible objects to which they refer). If you question this statement, try eating the word *pie* the next time you get hungry for something sweet. Or since a word is to its referent as a map is to its territory, just take a walk on your map the next time you want to take a trip. As Korzybski repeatedly explains, our words merely represent the world of events and things outside our skins but are never the real things. Ogden and Richards (*The Meaning of Meaning*, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1930, p. 11) presents the symbolic nature of language as a triangle, the three points representing Referent, Thought, and Symbol.

This semantic principle of the symbolic nature of language points to these suggestions for better communication:

a) Insofar as possible, use words with real physical objects or actions as referents, and make them specific enough to call to the receiver's mind the particular referent you want him to consider. If your receiver has seen or touched the kind of thing you are talking about, he is much more likely to get the concepts you want to convey about it than if you talk in generalities or talk about abstractions (concepts like loyalty and honesty that do not exist in the physical world but only in the mind). Even when your word has a referent, avoid equating the word with the physical object (for which it is only a symbol) or with some facet of it: "Russia *is* the Berlin Wall" or "Communism *is* . . .".

b) Especially in reading and listening, try to look behind the words and envision the things and ideas the words represent. You can remember the thought much easier than all the exact words used to

represent it. And in taking notes or answering questions about what you've heard or read, present the concepts in your own words except for key words and phrases. If you concentrate on words, you'll likely learn the words and repeat them parrot-like without understanding the thought they were intended to convey.

c) Though you cannot avoid the use of some abstract words (which have no referents in the physical world), try to keep them to a minimum. Then consider the context in which they are used. If you have described several actions a man has taken and then you commend him for his *integrity*, the context makes clear what you mean by the otherwise abstract word *integrity*. That's the way abstract words are used best: as summarizing words.

## **L**ISTENING AND READING<sup>2</sup>

Speaking and writing are initiating phases of communication. Listening and reading are receiving phases. All are vital for a literate individual in today's civilization.

Most training in schools is devoted to writing, reading, and—to a lesser extent—speaking. Yet from the time we start to learn, and as long as we continue to learn, we spend at least as much communicating time in listening as we do on all the other three. As we advance—pre-school, grade school, high school, college—and become more proficient in and dependent on reading, many of us, unless we consciously strive to do otherwise, steadily deteriorate in listening efficiency.

But how much easier we can make our learning and living if we are conscious of the fact that listening (to TV, radio, lectures, sermons, interviews, conferences, directives, conversations, etc.) accounts for about three times as much of our communication time as reading does!

### **T**he Task of Listening

Neither good reading nor good listening is easy. Both require training, either supervised or self-disciplined. Of the two activities, listening is the more demanding and the more difficult for most of us. The written word is always there for the reader to go back to. The spoken word, once uttered, is gone unless stored in the reader's mind (a job that most of us do not perform well). The reader can proceed at his own speed; the listener must adapt to the pace of the speaker. And from early childhood we are taught a greater respect for the

<sup>2</sup> See Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, *Are You Listening?* McGraw-Hill, New York, 1957, 235 pp.; Ralph G. Nichols and Thomas R. Lewis, *Listening and Speaking*, William C. Brown, Dubuque, 1954, 250 pp. Both these publications contain extensive bibliographies.

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printed word than for the spoken one. With but a few quite recent exceptions, schools have emphasized reading far more than listening. As a result, though we are far from being good readers, most of us are deplorably worse listeners.

Through good listening we can certainly broaden our knowledge on many subjects; we can frequently secure information that is not available any other way; we can improve our own speaking; we can save ourselves time. Then, too, good listening has a therapeutic value for both listener and speaker: good listeners make a good speaker better, and this, in turn, is a direct benefit to the listeners.

Listening takes time, certainly. It requires patience, even courage, to listen to the things we don't want to hear—for example, that we are wrong. Conversely, attentive listening can often win an argument by making the speaker careful about his "facts" and phrasing.

Though the statement may strike you as obvious, learning to be a good reader does not make you a good listener any more than learning to be a good listener makes you a good reader. Several differences in the two communicating processes help to explain why. Not only are the styles different (greater variety in sentence length and style, much more use of phrases, more personal references, more informality, more repetitions, and more adaptations in oral than in written). The role of the nonverbal is even more significant. A speaker's gestures, facial expressions, pitch of voice, inflections, rhythm and speed, and pronunciation constantly affect the final message received by his listeners.

The reader uses his eyes alone. The listener uses his eyes and ears. This concentration of effort is no easy, taken-for-granted matter. It can be immensely rewarding, however.

Though in what we shall term "everyday living" you will listen and learn in interviews, lectures, conferences, and conversation, the following suggestions are concerned primarily with listening to speeches.

***Identify the Subject and Plan.*** Most speakers will deliver planned talks. Such talks will usually be organized in the traditional pattern of introduction, thesis, body, conclusion.

Many excellent speakers will tell a story, or quote from some well-known authority or publication, or say something startling first to secure your favorable attention. Such a beginning may be appropriate, even germane; but rarely is it of the essence. Many excellent lecturers dispense with the irrelevant beginning and start immediately with genuine subject matter, and wisely so.

The essential point for concentration is when the speaker announces what he is going to talk about; he may also point out why; and often he will announce his plan of presentation. If you are not tuned in for his thesis statement, you are going to have difficulty

following what he says. If you can also get his general plan from the first, you will be able to follow his development more easily.

**Stay Tuned In.** The body of the speech (the longest part) includes all the points that support his fundamental proposition or thesis. For evidence the speaker may use statistics, testimony, stories, to name some.

He may present his points and the evidence supporting them in *deductive* order (he usually will if his purpose is only to inform). This is, stated very simply, generalization followed by supporting material. If his purpose is to persuade, he will likely follow an *inductive* order (generalization after evidence).

Obviously this is the part on which you should exercise your powers of concentration and your critical faculties. The questions of completeness (omissions and slanting), validity, appropriateness, and recency are significant here.

You will find this part easier to follow (and more interesting to you) if, when possible, you check his announced plan of presentation against what he delivers and stay on the alert for transitions—those statements signaling a change of point. The points or principles (the *ideas*) the speaker establishes reveal the blueprint of his plan and establish the final structure. The *facts* supporting the principles are subheads.

If the speaker announces no plan, try to anticipate what he is going to say. If your guess proves to be right, you'll feel pleasure—and probably reveal it in an empathic circuit response to the speaker. And if you're wrong? Never mind, you'll have concentrated better and benefited from the mental exercise of comparison and contrast.

This anticipating process will not cause you to miss out on anything significant: the mind can function (receive and decode) at a pace about four times faster than the average speaker will deliver (transmit after encoding).

Good speakers (and good writers) will build up their points or principles step by step so that the conclusion suggests itself before it is announced. In an informative speech, the conclusion is often very short. It may be no more than a quick recap in phrase form of the main points and a brief statement of how the thesis (or subject or speech) is significant to the audience. The conclusion of the persuasive speech may be a little longer. The persuasive speaker may not reveal his stand until this time. In addition to establishing his real objective, he may use strong argument. Question. Challenge. But reserve judgment until you've had the time to sift and reevaluate—to review and rebuild.

When you're the trapped victim of a speaker who indulges in harangue, cajoling, or bombast, tune out; you're entitled to stop listening.

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**Be Sensible; Control Your Note Taking.** The temptation to apply pencil or pen to paper and start to record a speaker's words verbatim is one that for many listeners is too great to overcome—unfortunately. This kind of note taking causes even the experienced listener to lose many of the significant ideas, to become confused, and eventually to become so frustrated that he gives up on note taking and, usually, on listening also.

Most speakers and lecturers (including teachers) agree that good listeners (including students) take good notes. They also agree that those who take good notes listen a lot and write a little. Possibly the best piece of advice we can give you is to keep your notes brief and clear during listening (complete thoughts for major points; just words and short phrases for supporting details). You can expand and review later.

Rarely does an introduction merit recording. Even the thesis is better not written down when it is first stated—though you certainly want to have it clearly in mind when the speaker launches into his main points and evidence. (It is better written down after the completed speech.) Even the brief outline or plan (if the speaker gives you one) is better recorded point by point as you go along rather than at the time the speaker first announces it, just before going into his first major point. In listening, try to jot down ideas, not facts and illustrations.

The careful distinction between fact and idea leads a listener to one system of note taking that is economical and efficient. Divide your paper into two columns, one for facts, the other for principles. You'll have difficulty determining which is which sometimes. But the effort will help you to concentrate and will provide enough useful reminders for later review. You'll have more entries in your facts column than in your principles column. If you have to slight the recording of one, slight the facts; concentrate on the principles.

An even less time-consuming system of note taking is that of précis writing. (The words *abstract*, *summary*, even *synopsis* and *epitome*, mean essentially the same.) Stated very simply, this means to listen extensively, then write rapidly. Most speakers will state a generalization followed by supporting details (or the reverse) and then, by a clearly indicated transition, signal the completion of that point and the approach of another. During this time the listener needs to jot down a sentence or two stating in his own words the idea or principle the speaker has attempted to establish. Then he should resume listening until the next generalization is stated.

Certainly a good listener will always write a précis of the conclusion and of the thesis or fundamental proposition (the latter preferably after the speaker has finished).

The sooner the listener can review his notes after the speech, the

better. Of course as he listened he should have mentally questioned for completeness, adequacy and appropriateness, authenticity, recency, and omission of data. An even more fruitful time to do this is shortly after the talk in a review of his notes, supplementing and rebuilding, questioning, searching for negative evidence, and finally arriving at an evaluation.

As a good listener, you want to strive to understand each main point made by your speaker. If you're too preoccupied with proving him wrong, you won't get his message. Withhold your judgments and decisions until after you have reviewed his main ideas and thesis.

***Avoid the Main Stumbling Blocks to Good Listening.*** Without the wish and the will to, you won't profit from anyone's suggestions. Our pointing out some common failings may help you to improve, however.

To begin with, accept the fact that most of us much prefer to be heard than to keep silent and lend an attentive ear and mind. Listening is hard work demanding patience, an open mind, a considerate—even charitable—mind. Most of us much prefer to consider our own individual interests and air what is on our own minds. The temptation to tune out and escape to reverie or daydreaming is ever with us.

And so we are prone to pretend attention when our minds are not receiving any ideas being transmitted. No speaker with much experience is easily fooled by the head-nodder, the glassy-eyed starer, the marbelized Thinker. Such audience characters are only fooling themselves. They are no more interested in listening than the foot tapper, the pen flipper, the book slammer, etc. If you fall in one of these classes, wake up—and learn.

Another stumbling block (founded on very superficial attitudes) is undue attention to the speaker's appearance, voice, or speech characteristics. A word is only a symbol, not reality; a man's appearance is only his outward shell, not an indicator of his mind; speech is only the vehicle, not the ideas. Though we all like to be personable people and do respond in almost motor fashion more to good-looking people than to those who are not, we need to remember that Steinmetz was a deformed man, almost a dwarf. One of the most brilliant lectures at a recent medical meeting was delivered by a man whose hands, head, and face (because of an uncorrectable breakdown of his nerve system) trembled and twitched almost convulsively. These are extremes, yes; but the principle is the same. Don't shut yourself off from learning because of a person's physiognomy, size, dress, or voice characteristics. He may have a lot to contribute.

All too often we are guilty of abruptly rejecting or dismissing a speaker and his subject because we consider them dull or difficult.

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Very few "uninteresting" speeches are devoid of something useful. Remember that the "dull" speaker is probably doing just what his assignment was—to give you facts and ideas—and that he refuses to insult your intelligence, or take pay under false pretenses, by entertaining you instead. Be selfish: take for yourself what is meaningful and useful. Furthermore, if the speaker really is wrong, remember that you can often learn by observing what not to do! As for rejecting the difficult discourse, remember that this can become a pattern of progressive mental deterioration. The more you do it, the flabbier and more superficial your mind becomes. The only suggestions we can make are continually renewed determination to "hear the man out" and a planned effort to tackle uninteresting as well as difficult material.

Another stumbling block is the tendency of listeners to let physical surroundings distract them. Airplanes, buses, trains, thunder, and other outside noises are sometimes loud, and rarely can the listener do anything about them. But they are noises that most of us don't even hear or readily ignore when we want to (a favorite TV program, for instance). Many physical circumstances you can control as an individual. Windows and doors close as well as open. Heating mechanisms turn off as well as on. Wraps certainly can be removed as well as put on. If you as an individual can't control the distraction, enlist the aid of the speaker; he'll probably appreciate your report. Even if listeners and speaker are trapped and can't move to a more favorable place, then at least they will be alerted to the fact that both will have to exert extra effort to concentrate on effective sending and receiving of the message.

One more point, which is a reminder of something already said: In your listening concentrate on principles, not detailed facts presented in support of principles. Emphasis on facts makes you lose principles, which are the most significant parts of speeches; emphasis on principles makes you not only get the principles or ideas but also helps you remember many of the facts that support them.

Good listening saves the listener time and money—in academic, social, and professional roles.

### **Efficient Reading**

Unless you are an exception, you have had much more specific training in reading than in listening. Besides, much of what was said about listening in the preceding section also applies to reading. We shall, therefore, discuss this phase of communication in much less detail than the listening phase just covered.

If you are reading only for pleasure, you can relax and be almost passive as you proceed at whatever pace you please. If you are not

satisfied with your reading pace, you may want to enroll for one of the reading-improvement courses offered by many schools and counseling services or clinics. The aim of these is to increase the reader's rate and comprehension. If no such course work or counseling is available to you, you may want to read some of the excellent books on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

If you are reading for information and instruction (as opposed to pleasure or entertainment), you can profit even more from such courses and books. The following brief suggestions give you only the main points of some of those books.

When you read an informative publication (book, section, chapter, or article)

1. Understand the scope and limitations of the subject as evidenced in the title and often in a subtitle, the preface, introductory comments, and footnote explanations.
2. Determine as closely as you can the primary purpose, which may be only implied. Phrase it in your own words.
3. Take advantage of mechanical aids (indentations, paragraphing, outline symbols, change of type, etc.) and transitions as you read through the article, section, or chapter the first time *rapidly*. Don't ponder over phrases or even whole sentences; don't look up definitions. *Read through and read fast!*
4. When you've finished, try to recall as much as you can. Check the theme or central idea you have formulated against the author's expression of it either in the ending or the beginning.
5. Reread the material paragraph by paragraph. (The first rapid reading will decrease your reading time at this stage, and much that was foggy the first time will be clear.) If you own the material (but not in library materials, PLEASE!), underscore key words and topic sentences (which do not necessarily appear in every paragraph but often do at the beginning or end). Indicate which paragraphs belong together. Paraphrase in the margins the main ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> We suggest that you start with these in this order. Some of them have bibliographies to direct you further.

1. Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1940.
2. Francis P. Robinson, *Effective Study*, Harper, New York, 1961.
3. George D. Spache and Paul C. Berg, *Faster Reading for Business*, Crowell, New York, 1958.
4. Walter S. Guiler and Claire J. Reath, *Developmental Reading*, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1958.
5. Norman Lewis, *How to Read Better and Faster*, Crowell, New York, 1944.
6. George D. Spache and Paul C. Berg, *The Art of Efficient Reading*, Macmillan, New York, 1955.
7. Julia Florence Sherbourne, *Toward Reading Comprehension*, Heath, Boston, 1958.
8. Phillip B. Shaw, *Effective Reading and Learning*, Crowell, New York, 1955.
9. Stella Center, *The Art of Book Reading*, Scribner's, New York, 1952.

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Then

6. If you are reasonably certain of the meaning of a word from the context, you are probably safe in not looking it up. Otherwise, look it up and pencil the appropriate definition in the margin.
7. When the article is fairly short and not formally organized, you're probably better off simply to write a short précis.
8. When the article or chapter is formally organized, you may want to write a formal outline. Such outlining is another step in remembering and is a virtual necessity if you need to submit an oral or a written report. This will be fairly fast for you if you have followed the preceding suggestions.

These suggestions apply if you want or need to do no more than record and possibly transmit what some author wrote. If you want or need to evaluate, then you will need to answer such questions as

1. About the author:
  - a) Who is he?
  - b) What is his position or status?
  - c) Is he a recognized authority?
  - d) Is he unbiased or does he have an axe to grind?
2. About the treatment:
  - a) Are generalizations supported by evidence?
    1. Is evidence secondary or primary?
    2. If evidence is primary, does his method of procedure appear sound?
    3. Is there ample evidence?
  - b) Is coverage of major points adequate, or are there significant omissions?
  - c) What is the announced or apparent intended audience? Is treatment adapted to this audience?

You may want to add to this list. Certainly it is not intended to be exhaustive.

And remember, no speaker or writer is infallible. A printed statement may mean nothing more than that the statement is in print.

## **SPEAKING**

Speaking is one of the initiating or transmitting phases of communication (the other, of course, is writing, with which the greatest part of this book is concerned). This treatment of speaking is brief because we have pointed out in the sections on listening some of the basic considerations affecting speakers and speeches and because this book is *not* intended for use in speech development. So many excellent books on the subject are available that we shall not even suggest any.

Certainly successful speeches are characterized by centrality of

theme, coherent and compact organization, clarity and vividness of phrasing, and other stylistic considerations which are also characteristics of good writing. But you can plan and even write out an excellent paper which is a miserable speech unless you take advantage of the assistance available to you from speech specialists. You will be a better speaker for being a better writer. But training and practice in writing is no substitute for training and practice in speaking. For the technical details of speaking (articulation, pronunciation, voice control, gestures, audience approach, type of speech) nothing supplants a qualified speech instructor (or coach) and/or a thorough specialized book.

While a speaker is relieved of the necessity for observing the conventions of punctuation and spelling, he must assume responsibility for indisputable pronunciation. He also has a greater responsibility for clear, unmistakable labeling of parts (transitions, topic ideas) because his listener has no opportunity to ask for repetition of a point—unless he is in conversation. A writer knows (though he should not rely on that knowledge) that a reader can, if absolutely necessary, go back and reread passages which are not immediately clear. A listener (except in conversation) must understand the first time or not at all.

Certainly precise pronunciation (necessary in speaking) will help you to eliminate many spelling errors when you write. Certainly the principles of good organization employed by the trained speaker will carry over to make him a better writer than he would have been without such training. And since you talk (not necessarily make a speech) much more frequently than you write, you will write more clearly, effectively, and economically IF YOU MAKE A CONSTANT EFFORT ALSO TO SPEAK THAT WAY. Unfortunately, however, most of us merely converse; we do not plan and deliver speeches. And many of us do not practice precision and economy of speech or grammatically acceptable language in our daily conversations. Our bad speech habits, no less than our good, are inclined to show up in our writing too.



## **Part Two**

# **HOW A READER REACTS TO A LETTER**



# I. Appearance: What the Reader Sees

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- ✓ Stationery
- ✗ Letterhead
- 3 Forms of Indention and Punctuation
- ✗ Placement on the Page
  - Picture-Frame
  - Standard-Line
- ✗ Position and Spacing of Letter Parts
  - Standard Parts
  - Special Parts
- ✗ Addressing the Envelope; Folding and Inserting the Letter

JUST ABOUT everybody has to write business letters. Most people consider themselves "pretty fair" letter writers, too. Actually, however, the statement, "Anything done by everybody is seldom done well," is as true of business letter writing as it is of any other activity.

If you do write good business letters, you can answer "Yes" to the following questions:

1. Do your letters reflect basic good will?
2. Do your letters follow good persuasion (sales) principles?
3. Is the style of your letters interesting, clear, and inconspicuous?
4. Is the appearance of your letters pleasant and unobtrusive?

You and any other business letter writer should apply these four tests in that order because

- your letter may establish an initial favorable impression because its appearance is pleasant and unobtrusive, yet fail completely because its language is dull, vague, inaccurate, difficult to follow, unnatural, or full of errors;
- its appearance may be good and it may be written in natural, clear style, yet fail because it does not stress benefits to the reader (that is, it does not follow proved sales techniques);
- even with good looks, appropriate style, and persuasive presentation, your letter can fail if it reflects poor tone and/or fails to reflect a desire to be of service to the reader;

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—with all four desirable qualities—good will, persuasion, good style, and good looks—it will accomplish its purpose in most instances.

To explain and illustrate these four essentials of any good letter is the function of Part Two of this book. To show how the principles are applied in all kinds of letters is the main function of the other chapters on letters.

We do not believe you can write the good letters you are capable of writing without understanding and appreciating the relative significance of each of these four essentials. For that reason we ask you to read extensively before you start writing; hence no letter problems appear until the end of Part Two.

The appearance of an individualized letter is like the appearance of a person: the less it attracts attention to itself, the better. The question of whether your letter has a pleasant and unobtrusive (undistracting) appearance is important because it is the first impression the reader has of your letter. For that reason and that reason alone we take it up first in treating the four criteria you should apply to your written business messages.

The wording, the persuasive qualities, and a desirable tone reflecting good will are more influential than the looks of the letter in determining its success or failure. But, just as some listeners (receivers) will reject the messages of speakers (senders) who do not come up to expected standards of favorable appearance, so will many readers reject the written message that calls attention to the format and distracts from the ideas.

A personalized (individualized) letter sent by first-class mail will nearly always get a reading. Flashy designs and lavish colors in it are like yelling at a person whose attention you already have. Even worse, if your letter is either too messy or too gaudy or if it violates the conventions of letter form, the appearance distracts the reader's attention from the important feature—your message.

Sales letters are sometimes justifiable exceptions. Because they are usually unpersonalized mass mailings, they sometimes struggle to get read at all. In striving to capture attention, their writers may wisely use cartoons, gadgets, and lavish colors if the unusual appearance is a symbol of the key idea and if the message quickly takes over the hold on the reader's attention. In general, however, the physical letter should serve only as a vehicle for your message and should not be noticed.

### Stationery

The first thing that will be noticed if it is inappropriate is your stationery. The most common business stationery—and therefore the least noticed—is 20-pound bond with some rag content in  $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$

sheets. Variations acceptable under appropriate circumstances include heavier and lighter paper, different sizes, and various colors and shades.

Paper heavier than 20-pound is more expensive, too stiff for easiest folding, and too thick for clear carbons; and lighter than 16-pound is too flimsy and transparent for letters. (As you know, carbon copies are usually made on lighter paper, both because it is cheaper and because you can make a greater number of clear copies with it.)

The main off-standard sizes are Executive or Monarch letterheads ( $7\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $10\frac{1}{2}$ " or 11"), used mainly by top executives, and half-sheets ( $8\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{2}$ "), used most frequently in intra-company notes but also often for short replies. A common objection to any odd size is that it does not fit standard files.

Though white is the standard, only the rainbow and your sense of appropriateness to your kind of business set the limits for color variations. Numerous tests have shown that colored papers sometimes produce better results in sales mailings. But existing test results do not prove that any one color will always work best for any kind of letter. If you are sending out large mailings, you may be wise to run your own test on a small sample to see what color works best for that particular situation.

Paper with some rag content is more expensive than all-pulp paper, but it gives the advantages of easier and neater erasures, pleasant feel, durability, and resistance to yellowing.

Whatever the choice of paper for the letter sheets, the same quality should be used for envelopes and second pages.

The acceptable variations in stationery allow you to reflect the personality of your business, just as you select clothes appropriate to your personality. A back-alley repair shop would not use pink-tinted 24-pound bond in the Monarch size. Nor would a bank president select paper that looks and feels cheap. The big points are appropriateness and inconspicuousness. In selecting the paper for your letterheads, then, you will do well to ask whether there is good reason to choose something other than 20-pound bond,  $8\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$  11". Anything else is more likely to distract the reader's attention from the message of the letter.

## **Letterhead**

Designing letterheads has become a job for specialists who know paper stocks, color, and design; so most paper suppliers provide such specialists, at least as consultants. Any business writer, however, should know something of the main principles and trends.

The main trend for some years has been toward simplicity. Letterheads used to take up a good part of the sheet with slogans, names of

RICHARD D JIRWIN . INC  
1818 RIDGE ROAD - HOMewood ILLINOIS - A SUBURB OF CHICAGO  
CHICAGO TELEPHONE. INTEROCEAN 6-8200      LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE. SYCAMORE 4-2214

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officers, and pictures of the firm's plant and products. The good modern letterhead usually takes no more than 2 inches at the top. It uses wording and design to convey the necessary information and an atmosphere symbolic of the business firm it represents. The minimum content is the name and address of the firm. An added trade mark or slogan indicates the nature of the business unless the name makes it clear. Telephone numbers and departmental designations are other common additions. Firms doing much international business frequently give a code address for cablegrams. On the theory that age suggests stability, many firms also give their starting dates. Though two or more colors sometimes appear, modern designers

are careful to avoid garish combinations, elaborate designs, and usually any color unless it signifies something about the nature of the business. The letterheads for all the letters in this chapter are typical modern forms.

## Forms of Indention and Punctuation

Letters 1 through 4 have been placed in this chapter as best they could be to tell the story and illustrate the shifts in letter indentation and punctuation, along with other points about letter form. They discuss decisions which you will have to make in choosing an acceptable form for your letters. They are integral parts of the explanation; so you should read them thoroughly as well as look at them. The sequence is according to our estimate of present popularity of the different forms (but we realize that some teachers and office managers will not agree). Though it is not chronological, some of the important points to note are:

1. The two big trends are toward simplicity and time-saving.
2. All forms that are consistent are "correct"; but either the outmoded or the ultramodern does tend to characterize the writer. Of course, there is no law against driving a Model T or a horse and buggy or the newest design of sports car; but each does call attention to itself and characterize its user.
3. In studying letter writing you should learn all forms, with their advantages, disadvantages, and dangers; but you should realize that if you go to work for a company, you should use the company's established form unless and until you can persuade responsible personnel of the wisdom of changing.

You should also realize that you can mix forms (with blocked parts and indented paragraphs, for example) and be in perfectly good company. Hanging indentation (the first line of the paragraph extending out five or more spaces to the left beyond the other lines) is also an accepted form, though not so common.

## Placement on the Page

Even with appropriate paper and a well-designed letterhead, you can still spoil the appearance (and thus distract from the message) unless you place the letter on the page properly. Two methods are in common use: the Picture-Frame and the Standard-Line.

**Picture-Frame.** Typing a letter so that it looks like a picture framed by the white space around it, as in Letter 1, is still the more widely used plan. It takes a little more time than the Standard-Line method because you have to set the marginal stops according to your estimate of each letter's length, but it enables you to fit long and

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short letters to the page in more conventional fashion. Also, you can save time sometimes by increasing the line length and thus getting on one page material that would require two pages by the Standard-Line plan.

The idea is that a rectangle drawn around the letter (not includ-

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
GAINESVILLE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

February 7, 19--

Miss Elizabeth Diller  
1328 Waukegan Street  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Miss Diller:

Both you and your employer are right. Indented form with closed punctuation is "correct"; but so are several others, including the much more popular semiblock with mixed punctuation I'm using here.

Since the boss has the right to establish policy, however, you'll have to type his letters the way he wants them. Of course if he welcomes suggestions, you can tell him that indented form with closed punctuation strikes most modern readers as behind the times; and you can show him that it costs him money by slowing you up.

That form was the style before typewriters came into use. Then one day a bright secretary decided to quit wasting time indenting and punctuating the lines in headings and inside addresses. That started a continuing trend toward efficiency and simplicity in letter form.

Since she still indented for paragraphs, the form she used is called semiblock; and since she continued to use a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close, she used what is now called mixed punctuation. Later dropping of the paragraph indentation, and omitting the useless colon and comma, produced block form with open punctuation.

Semiblock and block are certainly more widely used today than the other forms; and the order of frequency in punctuation style is mixed, open, and closed. But all are correct.

You may show your employer this letter as the most widely used form if you want to; but don't lose your job over such a small matter as which form to use for his letters.

Cordially yours,

*C. W. Wilkinson*

C. W. Wilkinson, Professor

ing the printed letterhead) should look like a picture framed in the marginal white space. You determine the width of side margins according to your letter length and make the top margin the same. The bottom margin will take care of itself automatically. It should be about one and a half times as wide as the other margins.

In gaining experience, a typist soon learns where to set a typewriter's marginal stops for letters of varied lengths. If you are not an experienced typist, however, the following tips and the table of approximate settings may be helpful while you learn to estimate.

Your first step in using the Picture-Frame plan is to determine which size of type you have by measuring on a line of copy or on the typewriter's numbered scale. Though pica and elite type both give you six lines to the inch as you go down the page, pica gives you only 10 characters to the inch across the page, whereas elite gives you 12. That 20 per cent increase in how much you can say in a given space is the reason for the increasing use of elite.

Your second step is to set the paper guide at the left end of the roller or platen. Unless you have studied typing and learned another method, you will make your figuring easier if you

1. Set the typewriter carriage on a round number (40 for pica, 50 for elite)
2. Then set the paper guide so that the center of the page lines up with the type guide.

As your third step, set the marginal stops equal distances from the center number (40 or 50). The elite lines obviously will have to be shorter than the pica lines; but, since they will leave wider margins, including those at the top and bottom, the letter typed in elite will have fewer lines and therefore must have more spaces to the line. The following table gives approximate settings for letters of different lengths on letterhead stationery:

<i>No. of Words in Message</i>	<i>Settings for Pica</i>	<i>Settings for Elite</i>
100 or less	15-65	23-77
125-175	12-68	20-80
200-250	10-70	16-84

If you are using plain paper (without a letterhead), use the settings on the next line above for a given number of words in the table. Settings of 20-60 for pica and 28-72 for elite can be used for short letters on plain paper. The last settings in the table allow more than 250 words if a letterhead does not take up part of your space.

The figures in the table are only approximations to what will fit the page attractively. Several factors pointed out in the two sections on spacing of letter parts affect the number of words that will fall into a given typewriter setting.

**Standard-Line.** As illustrated by Letter 2, the Standard-Line plan of placing a letter on the page saves time because the typist does not have to reset marginal stops for letters of varied length. Typewriters are set to the company's standard line (usually six inches); thus all letters have the same side margins. The top margin is about the same as the side margins, and the bottom margin about one and a half times as wide. By varying from the standard spacing between letter parts (more or less between the date and inside address, for example, or three spaces instead of two between paragraphs), the typist can adjust letters of differing lengths for proper height.

### Position and Spacing of Letter Parts

**Standard Parts.** The usual business letter has six standard parts. As a general rule, letters are typed in single spacing within parts and double spacing between parts. Exceptions are explained as they come up.

The *heading* or first part of a letter on plain paper must include the sender's address (but usually not his name) and the date. It establishes both top and side margins because it is the first thing on the page, and the end of the line going farthest to the right sets the margin. It may appear on the left, too, in a pure-block form. Such a heading is usually three lines but often more. Thus it affects the number of words that can be fitted into a given typewriter setting.

On printed stationery, the date line can be written as a unit with the letterhead (to complete the heading, as in Letter 1) or as a separate part. As a unit with the letterhead, the typed-in date is placed for best appearance according to the design of the printed part. Usually it retains the balance by appearing directly under the center of a symmetrical letterhead; often it rounds out one that is off balance. Often it is a separate part because of the difference between print and type. As a separate part, it fixes the upper right corner of the letter (as in Letter 4) or, in full block, the left corner (as in Letter 2). That is, it leaves the top margin (equal to the side margins) between itself and the letterhead, and its end sets the right margin (or its beginning the left margin). Thus it is the first exception to the general rule of double spacing between letter parts.

The *inside address*—the same as the envelope address—includes the title, name, and address of the person to receive the letter, preferably including the ZIP number (Zone Improvement Plan) to help postal clerks tell at a glance how to route a letter. The beginning of the address establishes the upper left corner of the letter if the date is a unit with the printed letterhead. Otherwise it begins at the left margin, two to six spaces lower than the date line. So it is the second exception to double spacing between letter parts. The typist uses

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UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

February 7, 19--

Miss Elizabeth Diller  
1328 Waukegan Street  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Miss Diller:

Though most letters are written according to the Picture-Frame Plan, certain outstanding firms for years have saved time with what is called the Standard Line.

Following this system, the secretary never resets the margin stops on her typewriter and begins all letters at the same top position on the page.

If the letter is short, she makes the black material extend over the greater part of the white space by increasing spaces between paragraphs and/or between the standard letter parts.

Thus she saves time consumed in calculating and in resetting margin stops to place extra-short letters on the page.

Some folks might be a little startled the first time they see a Standard-Line letter. But if your letters really have something to say, readers won't pay much attention to an appearance which is a little unorthodox but is certainly justifiable. Some readers won't even be aware of the difference.

Show this one to your employer, too; you may be surprised at his agreeableness.

Cordially yours,  
*J. H. Manning*

J. H. Manning  
Professor

LETTER 2. Standard-line layout, block with mixed punctuation, pica type.

the allowable spacing variations and the varying number of lines necessary for the inside address to fit all letters within each 50-word range in the table to the appropriate typewriter setting. (WARNING: Be careful to spell names right and to use the proper title; nobody likes to have his name misspelled or to be given the wrong title. And always put some form of courtesy title in front of other people's names.)

Increasingly you'll see the inside address typed as the last standard part of the letter two spaces below notations concerning trans-

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GAINESVILLE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

February 7, 19--

Miss Elizabeth Diller  
1328 Waukegan Street  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

SIMPLIFIED LETTER FORM

Both you and your employer are right, Miss Diller. Indented form with closed punctuation is "correct." But so are semiblock and block forms with open punctuation. Both are more widely used than indented form is.

The further simplified form which I am using here, with all parts beginning at the left margin to save time, is fast gaining favor. This form was first introduced during World War I but did not take hold well until the National Office Management Association (NOMA) sponsored it after World War II. It is based on the ideas that

- no parts need labels. (The subject line in this letter is clear without a label, isn't it?)
- if you use the reader's name in the first line or two and write your letters sincerely or cordially, you do not need salutations or complimentary closes.
- by beginning all parts flush with the left margin and omitting end punctuation, you can turn out more letters at lower cost.

True simplification of letters means more than that, of course; but as far as form is concerned, those are the most important considerations.

Though many outstanding firms have adopted the form, and though it may be almost universal in American business sometime in the future, it may yet distract the attention of readers who aren't used to it.

Perhaps after seeing the advantages of this simplified form, you'll want to change your mind. If your boss asks for your suggestions, or if he welcomes them, you can show him the advantages. He's sure to be impressed by the argument that you can turn out more letters this way.

LETTER 3. Picture-frame layout, simplified form with open punctuation, elite type.

scriber or enclosures or distribution of copies. Many outstanding firms and individuals follow this practice. Most, however, continue to place it at the beginning of the letter rather than at the end.

The *salutation* or friendly greeting, the third standard part, begins at the left margin a double space below the inside address. As

Miss Elizabeth Diller, February 7, 19--, page 2

But since your employer has the right to establish policy, you should set up his letters the way he wants them. If he wants to pay you to take the time to type more conservative-appearing letters--which are just as "correct"--don't give the matter a second thought. Save your patience and energy for more significant considerations.

*Cecil Wilkinson*

C. W. Wilkinson, Professor

you may observe in Letter 3, some writers omit it. If used, it should be followed by a colon (:) or no punctuation whatsoever. Since it is the first indication of the formality of the letter, you should give some thought to the implications in how you address your reader and how you match the tone of your salutation in the complimen-

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UNIVERSITY ALABAMA

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

February 7, 19--.

Miss Elizabeth Diller,  
1328 Waukegan Street,  
Grand Rapids,  
Michigan.

My dear Miss Diller:

Your preference for blocked form with open punctuation is certainly justified; it is definitely more popular and is more economical than the indented form with closed punctuation which I am using here.

This form is not "incorrect" by any standard (though it is practically outlawed by correspondence supervisors and office managers). It is the preferred form of many executives associated with prominent firms of impeccable standing--of authoritative position. Such fine men often got their training in letter writing in the early 1900's.

If your employer is willing to pay for your extra time in following this form and chooses to be "old school," that is his decision.

Sincerely yours,  
*J. H. Menning*  
J. H. Menning,  
Professor.

LETTER 4. Picture-frame layout, indented form with closed punctuation, pica type.

tary close. The main forms are listed below in ascending order of formality with appropriate complimentary closes:

Dear (given name, nickname, or such more familiar term as originality can produce and good taste will allow)

Cordially yours or some more familiar phrasing, so long as it remains in good taste

Dear (surname or given name)	Sincerely yours or Cordially yours
Dear (any title plus surname)	Sincerely yours or Yours truly
My dear Mr. (or Mrs.) White	Yours truly or Sincerely yours
My dear Sir (or Madam)	Respectfully yours or Yours truly

"Gentlemen" is the invariable salutation for letters addressed to a company, regardless of formality and regardless of an attention line (even when some of the "gentlemen" are ladies). In line with the trend toward informal friendliness of business letters, most business writers use the person's name in the salutation when they can and match the friendly tone with some form of *sincerely* or *cordially*.

The *body* or message of the letter begins a double space below the salutation. The paragraphs are usually single-spaced with double spacing between, though very short letters may use double spacing within and triple spacing between paragraphs. Since the body is all one part, regardless of the number of paragraphs, the standard double spacing between paragraphs is a third exception to the general rule of spacing. The number of paragraphs therefore affects the fit of a letter to a given typewriter setting. A letter of 250 words in seven paragraphs, for example, will take at least four more lines than the same number of words in three paragraphs. Yet you should not overlook the chance to improve readability by keeping paragraphs short and itemizing points.

The *complimentary close* is typed a double space below the last line of the body. It may begin at the center of the page, or in line with the beginning of a typed heading, or in line with the date line when it is used as a separate part, or at a point to space it evenly between the center and right margin of the letter. The most common forms employ four key words—*cordially*, *sincerely*, *truly*, and *respectfully*—each ordinarily used with *yours*. Juggling the order of the key word and *yours* or adding *very*—as *Yours truly*, *Yours very truly*, *Very truly yours*—makes very little difference. The key words are the main consideration. Increasingly, business writers are dropping the *yours* in the forms involving *Sincerely* and *Cordially*. And, as you read in Letter 3, many writers favor dropping the complimentary close completely. If you want to drop the salutation and the complimentary close, you'll be in good company; just remember to drop both, not one or the other.

The form of the *signature block* depends on whether the letter is about your private affairs or your company business. In writing about your own business, you space four times and type your name.

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The typed name is important for legibility—and consideration for the reader. You then pen your signature above it.

But if a company instead of the writer is to be legally responsible for the letter, the company name should appear above the signature. The fact that the letter is on company stationery makes no difference. So if you want to protect yourself against legal involvement, type the company name in solid capitals (that's the way most firms do) a double space below the complimentary close; then make the quadruple space for your signature before your typed name. You also give your title on the next line below the typed name; or, if there is room, put a comma and your title on the same line with your name. Thus you indicate that you are an agent of the company legally authorized to transact business:

Very truly yours  
ACME PRODUCTS, INC.

Very sincerely yours  
LOVEJOY AND LOEB

John Y. Bowen  
Comptroller

(Miss) Phyllis Bentley, Treasurer

Because the possibility of legal involvement is usually remote, many writers omit the company name from the signature block in order to gain the more personal effect of a letter from an individual instead of from a company. In such instances it is company policy. Though there may be some readers who will feel greater security in dealing with a company instead of an individual and for whom the examples cited above would be preferable, the following form of signature is the preference of many well-known firms and individuals:

Cordially yours

Sincerely yours

H. P. Worthington  
Assistant Public Relations  
Manager

(Mrs.) Phyllis B. Hudson  
Treasurer

Women's signatures bring up a special problem. Note that in all the men's signatures illustrated, there is no title preceding the names. (Not even the President of the United States signs anything with either "President" or "Mr." preceding his name.) Without some indication, however, the person who answers a woman's letter does not know whether to address her as Miss or Mrs. Some writers dodge the question by using Ms., but this is far from universal practice. As

a matter of consideration for the other fellow, a woman should indicate whether she is to be addressed as Miss or Mrs.—the way Miss Bentley, who became Mrs. Hudson, did in the preceding examples.

**Special Parts.** Besides the six standard parts of a business letter, you will often find good use for one or more of the seven widely used special parts.

You can use an *attention line* in a letter addressed to a company if you want a certain individual in the company to read it. If you don't know the person's name, you may refer to him by title. For example, in a sales letter you may ask for the attention of the purchasing agent like this:

Black, Decker, and Smith  
1223 South Congress Avenue  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Attention of the Purchasing Agent

Gentlemen:

It's equally good form to write "Attention: Purchasing Agent" or "Attention, Purchasing Agent." Don't be surprised to see "The Purchasing Agent, Please"; it gets the job done perfectly well and without offense. You may center the attention line, if you prefer, and underscore it for increased emphasis. In either position, flush with the left margin or centered, double space above and below. Remember, however, that the salutation remains the same as for any letter to a company—"Gentlemen"—even when you use an individual's name in the attention line:

Black, Decker, and Smith  
1223 South Congress Avenue  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mr. C. R. Smith, please

Gentlemen:

The *subject line* may save words and help you get off to a fast start by telling your reader quickly what the letter is about or referring him to former correspondence for necessary background which he may have forgot. It usually appears a double space below the salutation; it often appears a double space above the salutation; and, when space is at a premium, it may be placed on the same line as the salutation. To make it stand out, many writers either underscore it or use solid capitals. In centered position or flush with the left margin it is equally acceptable. You can save some time by starting it at the left margin and typing it in solid capitals, as illustrated in Letter 3. The legal forms "Re" and "In Re" are gradually disappearing. The informal "About" is increasing in use. And more

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and more correspondents omit the word *subject* or its equivalent. The position and wording make clear what the subject line is.

*Initials* of the dictator and the typist often appear at the left margin a double space below the last line of the signature block. The trend is toward omitting the dictator's initials because of repetition from the signature block; but if they are used, they come first (usually in unspaced capitals) and are separated from the typist's by a colon, a diagonal, a dash, or an asterisk. A good method that saves time is to lock the shift and type all as CRA:MF or just write all in lower case as cra/mf. Some writers place the typed name here and omit it from the signature block, as in the following:

Very truly yours

[quadruple space for a signature]

Comptroller

J. H. Jennings:dp

An *enclosure notation*, a single or double space below the identifying initials (or in their place), is a reminder to the person putting up the mail that he must actually make the enclosure. It is especially important in large offices. Sometimes it is reinforced by an asterisk in the left margin at the line in the body referring to the enclosure. The word *Enclosure* may be spelled out or abbreviated *Encl.* or *Enc.*, followed by a number indicating how many enclosures or by a colon and words indicating what the enclosures are.

*Carbon-copy* designations are useful when persons other than the addressee should be informed of the contents of the letter. The names of people to receive carbons are usually listed after CC (or Cc or cc) at the left margin, a single or double space below either the initials or the enclosure notation if it is used.

*Postscripts* are rarely used in business today in the original sense of afterthoughts. Rather than arouse his reader's resentment by his poor planning, the modern business writer would have the letter typed over; or, in informal correspondence, he might add a pen-written note when signing. (Incidentally, there is some research evidence that such notes actually increase the pulling power of letters—probably because they give the letter a more personal touch.)

The main use of postscripts now is as punch lines. Since they have the advantage of the emphatic end position, they are often planned from the beginning to emphasize an important point. The well-planned postscript that ties in with the development of the whole letter and stresses an important point is effective.

When you do decide to use a postscript, it should be the last thing on the page, a double space below the last of the preceding parts.

The "P.S." is optional; position and wording clearly indicate that it is a postscript.

*Second-page headings* are helpful for filing and for reassembling multipage letters that become separated (especially true when a letter runs to three or more pages). Since pages after the first should be on plain paper, even when the first page has a printed letterhead, for identification they should carry something like one of the following, typed down from the top the distance of the side margins:

Mr. C. R. Jeans

-2-

March 21, 19—

or

Mr. C. R. Jeans

March 21, 19—

Page 2

or (for speed and equal acceptability)

Mr. C. R. Jeans, March 21, 19—, page 2

The body of the letter continues a quadruple space below this.

### **Addressing the Envelope; Folding and Inserting the Letter**

For those people who open their own mail, admittedly the envelope makes the first impression. Since many executives do not, however, their first impression comes from the unfolded letter.

The envelope should be of the same quality as the letterhead stationery, with the return address printed in the upper left corner in the same design as the printed letterhead. For letters on plain paper, the return address should be typed in the same place in the style of indentation and punctuation used for the letter.

The main address—the same as the inside address, except double-spaced if it is less than four lines—should be placed in the lower half of the envelope and balanced between the ends. That is, the beginning point should be the same distance from the left edge of the envelope as the ending point from the right edge. Since most addresses are blocked, it usually boils down to centering the longest line in the address.

If you elect to enjoy the economies of window envelopes, then you have no problem of addressing the envelope. Just remember to fold so that the inside address will show through without revealing any other part of the letter. When you crease the upper part of the letter so that the window will reveal nothing but the inside address, you usually have creases that divide the letter into approximately equal thirds. Most window envelopes used for letters are the No. 10.

When you're not using a window envelope, you fold and insert the

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letter according to the size of the envelope you are using. Two sizes are in common use: the No.  $6\frac{3}{4}$  or commercial size,  $3\frac{5}{8}$  inches by  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches; the No. 10 or official size,  $4\frac{1}{3}$  inches by  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches. For the first, fold the bottom up to within a half to a quarter inch of the top; fold from right to left about one third the width; then fold from left to right about one third, so that the last fold just fails to meet the other edge. For the No. 10 envelope, fold up from the bottom about one third the distance, then down from the top about one third, so that the last fold just fails to meet the other edge. In each method you divide your letter into approximately equal thirds. Then insert the letter in the envelope with the last fold to the back of the envelope and the open edge of the letter up. Thus the letter will avoid annoying and distracting the reader because it will unfold easily, quickly, and naturally in the way he is accustomed to.

*[All the problems for the first four chapters are at the end of Part Two because we think you should cover all four basic tests of a good business letter before trying to write any kind of letter. We urge you to read the first four chapters quickly but thoroughly so that you can put all the basic principles to use even in your first letter.]*

## **II. Style: What the Reader Reads**

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### **1. How to Write Interestingly**

- Depend Mainly on Content
- Put the Emphasis Where It Belongs
- Write Concisely but Completely

- Ideas Which Don't Deserve to Be Put into Words
- Deadwood Phrases

#### **Write Vividly: Avoid Indefiniteness**

- People in Action
- Active Rather than Passive Voice
- Concrete Rather than Abstract Language
- Specific Rather than General Words
- Enough Details to Make the Picture Clear

#### **Write Naturally to Avoid Triteness and Pomposity**

- Vary Sentence Pattern, Type, and Length to Avoid Monotony

### **2. How to Make Your Writing Clear**

#### **Make It Easy to Read**

- Words Your Reader Understands
- Reasonably Short and Direct Sentences
- Adjustment of Paragraph Pattern and Length
- Frequent Personal References
- Itemizations and Tabulations

- Plan for Unity, Coherence, Progress, and Proper Emphasis

- Use Accurate Wording, Punctuation, Grammar,  
and Sentence Structure

### **3. How to Keep Your Style Inconspicuous**

- Choose the Right Level of Usage for the Situation

- Informal English
- Formal English
- The Illiterate Level of Usage

- Follow the Conventions

- Spelling
- Poor Word Choice
- Unconventional Punctuation
- Grammar and Sentence Structure

**HAVING SURVIVED** your reader's test of appearance, your letter must pass the test of readability.

**For the second test of a good letter (or any other piece of writing),**

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ask yourself: Is It Written in an Interesting, Clear, and Inconspicuous Style?

If your letter is so uninteresting that it isn't read, you've obviously wasted your time.

If your letter is interesting enough to be read but is not clear, you've probably annoyed your reader because you've confused him. If he doesn't drop the matter, he has to write again to find out just what you mean.

And if your style is conspicuous because of something unexpected, inappropriate, or incorrect, it distracts the reader from *what* you've said (by calling attention to how you've said it) and causes him to doubt that your facts and reasoning are any more reliable than your writing. Both weaken the impact of your message, which is the important thing in letters.

Though poets, story writers, and essayists may sometimes write for the beauty of their style, a letter writer's language is only a means of communicating facts and ideas—without distorting or otherwise damaging them in transit.

To be effective, then, your letter style should be interesting enough to be read, clear when read, and inconspicuous.

### How to Write Interestingly

**Depend Mainly on Content.** In writing most letters, you should depend on the message, not the style, to arouse and hold your reader's interest. Usually you have an inquiry or some other indication that your reader is interested in your general subject. A first-class letter addressed to him will therefore nearly always get a reading. Tricks of style are unnecessary and even distracting to him. If the bare facts have insufficient appeal to gain the attention of your reader, you can make them both interesting and persuasive if you show him how they affect his life.

If you have no inquiry or other indication that the reader is already interested, you may be right occasionally to forget about keeping your style inconspicuous and to work for temporary attention by means of gadgets, tricks of style, and other artificial means at the beginning of your letter. Even then, however, you will have accomplished nothing unless your stunt leads into the message naturally and yields the stage to it promptly.

But just as many a good story or joke is ruined in the telling, a perfectly good message can become dull if poorly presented. Wordiness, indefiniteness, triteness and pomp, monotony, and difficult reading are the most common offenders. By replacing these with their opposites, you will have a style that will speed up your message rather

than slow it down or lose it completely—and that's all that style should contribute to making your letters interesting.

**Put the Emphasis Where It Belongs.** Since the content of your letter is obviously the greatest means of gaining interest, the big ideas of your message deserve the major emphasis.

Though you may use minor mechanical means of emphasis (underscoring, capitalizing, itemizing, using two colors), your four primary means of emphasizing an idea are (1) position, (2) space, (3) phrasing, and (4) sentence structure.

The most significant ideas you depend on to hold your reader's interest need to be placed in the emphatic beginning and ending positions of the letter, of your paragraphs—even of your sentences.

In addition, you write more about those points which you think need stressing. If you write ten lines about the efficiency of a dishwasher and only two lines about the convenience of it, you have emphasized efficiency more than convenience.

As a third major means of emphasis, you select concrete, specific words and phrases to etch the welcome or important idea in your reader's mind. When the idea is unwelcome or insignificant, you choose general words that merely identify, not stress.

Because an independent clause carries more emphasis than a dependent one, you can also stress or subordinate ideas through your choice of sentence structure. You may have noticed, for example, that the minor mechanical means of stressing ideas were merely named in a dependent clause. The four primary means, however, were each given a separate paragraph of discussion and thereby emphasized by means of space.

In messages carrying ideas in which the reader is assumed to be interested, those ideas are almost always used to begin and end letters. They usually begin and end paragraphs. They generally take up most of the space of the letter. They are phrased specifically. And they enjoy the benefits of independent construction instead of dependent. Conversely, unwelcome or unimportant ideas are generally embedded in a middle paragraph, covered just enough to establish their true meaning, and stripped of the emphasis of concrete, specific words.

The letter samples throughout this book make use of these principles for appropriate emphasis and its opposite, subordination.

For fuller discussion and illustration, see C. W. Wilkinson's article, "Controlling Emphasis in Letter Writing," in *Writing for Business* (Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Illinois).

**Write Concisely but Completely.** Every word that you can spare without reducing the effectiveness of your writing is wasteful if it remains. If you use too many words for the ideas you express, you

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stretch interest to the breaking point. But if you leave out necessary information and vivid details in trying to achieve brevity, you frequently fail to develop enough interesting ideas to hold or persuade your reader. You therefore face the dilemma of length.

A first step in the solution to that dilemma is a clear distinction between brevity and conciseness. Brevity is mere shortness—which is often overstressed. A common mistake in letter writing is that of sacrificing completeness because of a mistaken notion about the importance of brevity. Writing a letter lacking necessary information (and therefore lacking interest and persuasion) is poor economy. Either the letter is pure waste because it produces no result, or both you and your reader have to write additional letters to fill in the missing links of information. Even those people who say “A business letter should be brief!” do not mean that they are so illogical as to want to make decisions without all the pertinent information.

What these brevity-overconscious people want—what you want—is conciseness—making every word contribute to your purpose. A 50-word letter is brief; but if you can write the message in 25 words, the 50-word letter is not concise. A 400-word letter is not short; but if all the words contribute to the purpose, it is concise. So if you need three pages to cover all your points adequately and make your letter do what you want it to do, you should use that much space. Concision, then, comes not from omitting necessary information or details that contribute to clearness, persuasiveness, or interest but from writing all you should say in as few words as possible.

Experience may teach you to compose first drafts of letters that are both complete and concise; but, while you are gaining that experience, you need to

1. Avoid expressing ideas that don't deserve to be put into words and
2. Revise first drafts to eliminate deadwood.

Besides obviously irrelevant material, *ideas which don't deserve to be put into words* are

- a) Things the reader already knows which you do not wish to emphasize and
- b) Ideas which can be implied with sufficient emphasis.

Because it is often insulting as well as wasteful and dull, avoid using an emphatic independent clause for things the reader already knows. For example, a heating engineer's letter to an office manager about the discomforts of workers began as follows:

Three days ago you asked us to investigate the problem of discomfort among your office workers. [Assumes that the reader has a short

memory.] We have made our study. [Obviously, or he couldn't be reporting.] Too low humidity is apparently the main cause of your trouble. Your building is steam heated. [Doesn't the reader know?] Therefore your solution is to. . . .

The following revision says or implies everything in that paragraph, avoids the insults, saves most of the words, and is more interesting:

Too low humidity is apparently the main cause of your workers' discomfort. Since your building is steam heated, your solution is to. . . .

[To show the reasoning behind your suggestion, you do need to mention the fact that the building is heated by steam; but the subordinating *since* implies "Of course you and I know this, but it has to go in for the record and for completeness of logic." When you *have* to establish something or when the reader probably knows but you can't risk his not knowing or remembering, inform him subordinately.]

As a general principle, in answering a recent letter from an individual, don't waste words to say "I have your letter of . . ." or to tell what it said. Obviously, you got the letter or you wouldn't be answering it; and he will remember what it said—at least when you start talking about the same subject. Instead of

You asked us to let you know when the new model of the Clarion radio came on the market. It is obtainable now.

you can say the same thing with

The new model of the Clarion is now available.

The fact that you got his letter and the idea of "You asked us to let you know" are clearly implied.

Of course, if the inquiry is not recent or if somebody other than the original inquirer may read the answer (as often happens in big companies), you may need to make specific reference (by topic and date) to the letter you are answering. But even then you can often use a subject line to save words and allow the emphatic first sentence to say something important. Rather than

On February 20 you inquired about our experience with Mr. James H. Johnson. We are glad to tell you about his work for us.

Johnson was a steady, conscientious worker during the eighteen months he kept books for us.

you might better write

Mr. James H. Johnson, about whom you inquired February 20, was a steady, conscientious bookkeeper here for eighteen months.

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Under no circumstances do you need to waste words as in the following paragraph:

Permit me to take this opportunity to thank you for your letter which I have just received. In reply I wish to state that we shall be very glad to exchange the electric water heater in question for a similar one in a larger size in accordance with your request.

Through implication you can reduce that wordy beginning to

We shall be glad to exchange your water heater for a similar one in a larger size.

In most refusals you can save words and your reader's feelings by eliminating the negative statement of what you won't do and concentrating on what you will do. You thus *imply* the negative idea, for economy as well as interest. For illustrations, see "Positive Statement" (p. 112).

If the first draft contains any of the foregoing wasteful expressions, revision should eliminate them and *deadwood phrases* (those which take the long way around or contribute nothing to the ideas expressed).

Consider the following suggestive but far-from-complete list of offenders, in which the deadwood is blocked out or the concise statement follows in parentheses:

long ~~period of~~ time  
at ~~a distance of~~ 100 ft.  
is ~~at this time~~  
at ~~a price of~~ \$50  
~~important~~ essentials  
enclosed ~~herewith~~  
remember the fact that  
held a meeting (met)  
would like to (want to)  
during ~~the course of~~ the  
engaged in making a survey  
~~the color of~~ the X is blue  
until ~~such time as~~ you can  
in regard to (about or  
regarding)  
in the development of  
(developing)  
in this day and age (today  
or now)  
main problem is a ~~matter of~~ cost  
your ~~order for a~~ cultivator was shipped  
~~in the opinion of~~ Mr. Johnson (thinks)  
that is the situation ~~at this time~~ (now)

in the state of Texas  
neat ~~in appearance~~  
at the hour of 4:00  
eight ~~in number~~  
circular ~~in shape~~  
throughout the ~~entire~~ week  
~~at a later date~~  
during ~~the year of~~ 1955  
costs ~~the sum of~~ \$10  
came ~~at a time~~ when  
at all times (always)  
in the event that (if)  
put in an appearance (came)  
during the time that (while)  
these facts ~~serve to~~ give an idea  
made stronger ~~with a view to~~  
if ~~it is~~ possible, let me have  
~~according to~~ Mr. Johnson (says)  
arrived at the conclusion (concluded)

the X plow is quite different ~~in character~~  
made the announcement that (announced)  
for the purpose of providing (to provide)  
all the people who are interested in (interested people)  
at an early date (soon, if you have to be indefinite)  
decide at a meeting ~~which will be held~~ Monday  
eliminate needless words that ~~may be present~~  
~~there is~~ only one point ~~that~~ is clear, ~~and that is~~  
the price was higher than I expected ~~it to be~~  
the workers ~~are in a position to~~ (can) accept or reject  
the soldering process proved ~~to be of an unsatisfactory nature~~  
the general consensus of opinion among most businessmen is that  
(most businessmen think that)  
the trouble with the light was ~~that it was~~ too dim

Sometimes you can save several words by changing a whole clause to one word. For example:

buying new machines which are expensive—buying expensive new machines;  
using processes that are outmoded—using outmoded processes;  
saving work that does not need to be done—saving unnecessary work.

**Write Vividly: Avoid Indefiniteness.** Even good content concisely stated can be uninteresting if your reader gets only an inactive or fuzzy mental picture. The sharper you can make that picture, the better it will be. You will write vividly if you apply these five techniques:

1. Write about people in action. Make people the subject or object of many sentences.
2. Use active rather than passive voice.
3. Use concrete rather than abstract language.
4. Use specific rather than general words.
5. Give enough details to make the picture clear.

The most interesting thing in the world is *people in action*. Things happen because people make them happen. The most interesting, the most natural, and the clearest way to write about those happenings is to talk about those people who are the principal actors. That is why we suggest that you make people the subject or object of your sentences.

And, since the reader of a letter is most interested in himself, his interest will be influenced by how you put him into the picture as the main actor. "You can save 30 minutes at dinner time with a Pronto pressure cooker" is more vivid than "A Pronto pressure cooker saves 30 minutes at dinner time." (For psychological reasons, if a point is unpleasant, however, make your actor a third person or your message impersonal.)

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Consistent use of people as subjects will help you to write in *active rather than passive voice*. The passive "30 minutes at dinner time can be saved" lacks the vividness of the original illustration because it omits the all-important *who*. Besides, passive constructions are usually longer, weaker, and fuzzier than active ones. Excessive use of "to be" verbs (*be, is, am, are, was, were, been, being*) usually produces flat writing, partly because it leads to a passive style. If the basic verb in more than half your sentences derives from "to be," your style will seem flat instead of vivid. "There are" and "It was" beginnings (expletives) delay the real idea of the sentence and frequently force a writer to use unemphatic passive voice. The sentence "There are one million people in Cincinnati" is not so vivid as "One million people live in Cincinnati." "It was felt that . . ." gains vividness when the writer rephrases with "We felt . . ."

You can eliminate most passives and expletives if you will conscientiously try to use action verbs. People live, run, eat, buy—in short, act. They do not just exist, as indicated by *is, was, were, have been*. The price of a stock *creeps up, rises, jumps, zooms*—or *plummets*. For vividness (and for economy) good writers make their verbs do a big share of the work. Far be it from us to encourage you to needless and frivolous word coinage; but *dip, curve, skyrocket, phone, wire*, and many other original nouns are now commonly accepted verbs because people recognized the vividness of their use as verbs. The more action you can pack into your verbs, the more specific and concrete you can make your writing.

When you *use concrete rather than abstract language*, you give your reader sharper mental pictures. When you write *superiority, efficiency, and durability* in telling about a product, your words are abstract; they give your reader only hazy ideas. To make the picture sharp and lively, give the evidence back of the abstraction rather than name the abstraction itself. If you think your product is of highest quality, you must have reasons for thinking so. To establish the idea of superiority in cloth, for instance: thread count? number of washings before fraying? tensile strength? resistance to shrinkage and fading? Note that answers to these questions also show durability.

In job applications you need to put across the ideas of your sociability, initiative, dependability, which you can concretize by citing activities and organizational memberships, ideas and plans you have originated, attendance records, and completed projects. Thus you give evidence of these qualities and let your reader draw the abstract conclusions.

You further eliminate haziness and dullness when you use *specific rather than general words*. An investment, for instance, may be a stock certificate, a bond, a piece of real estate. To illustrate further, stock

may be common or preferred. The closer you can come to making your reader visualize the special type of thing named rather than just its general class, the more specific and hence the more vivid your writing is.

Take the verb *walk* as another example. Does a person amble, trudge, skip, or one of the fifty or more other possible ways of walking? When you are inclined to write *contact*, do you mean write, go see, telephone, telegraph? You will present a sharper picture if you name the specific action.

Comparisons help you to explain the unknown or variable in terms of the known. *Slowly* becomes sharper if you say "about as fast as you normally walk." "A saving of 2% when paid within 10 days" becomes more vivid if you add "\$2.80, or two free boxes of Lane's choice chocolates, on your present invoice of \$140."

You *can* be specific and concrete in the kind of information you give your reader; but unless you *give enough details to make the picture clear*, you will fail to attain vividness. Specifications for a house may indicate that the house is to be painted. But unless they tell the kind of paint, how many coats, and what colors, the painter does not have a clear picture of what he is to do until he comes back and asks. You need to flesh out the skeletons to bring them to life, even if it means some loss of brevity.

**Write Naturally to Avoid Triteness and Pomposity.** All kinds of trite expressions and jargon—usually the result of hazy thinking, or not thinking, by the writer—are inclined to dull interest and put the reader to sleep instead of stimulating his mind to action. They are even called "bromides" ("Flat, commonplace statements," Webster says) because of the use of bromides as sedatives and sleep-inducing medicines.

A businessman meeting another on the street would not say, "I beg to report receipt of your favor of the 29th ult." And if he is a good letter writer he would not write it either. He would more likely say or write, "Those tonnage figures for April were just what I needed," or "Your suggestions about the committee memberships helped a lot in my decision. Thanks." The first is slow, vague, roundabout, and stilted; the others are clear, direct, and natural.

Bromidic style goes back to the times when businessmen first began to have social status enough to write to kings, princes, and others at court. Feeling inferior, they developed slavish, stilted, and elaborately polite style to flatter the nobility. They "begged to advise" the nobleman that his "kind favor of recent date" was "at hand" and "wished to state" that "this matter" would "receive our prompt attention" and "begged to remain your humble, obedient servant." Today businessmen need not be so meek. Unfortunately, too many sheepishly follow

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somebody else, learn all they know about letter writing from the letters they receive, and thus continue an outmoded, inappropriate, and unnatural style. Like parrots, they use expressions unthinkingly.

Pompous writing (puffed-up, roundabout, and big-wordy) is as dull and confusing as the use of bromides. Why many businessmen write, "We will ascertain the facts and advise accordingly" when in conversation they would say quite naturally, "We'll find out and let you know," is a mystery. A Washington blackout order during wartime originally read: "Obscure fenestration with opaque coverings or terminate the illumination." A high official who wanted the message read and understood revised it to read: "Pull down the shades or turn out the lights."

A young lawyer was certainly pompous when he wrote as follows about a husband being sued for divorce:

The defendant is renowned as a person of intemperate habits. He is known to partake heavily of intoxicating beverages. Further, he cultivates the company of others of the distaff side, and wholly, regularly, and consistently refuses, demurs, and abstains from earnest endeavor to gain remuneration.

The judge summed up that "Mrs. Rigoni's husband drinks, chases other women, and refuses to work."

Stuffed-shirt writers frequently use a phrase or a whole clause when a well-chosen verb would express the idea better. For example: "Smith raises the objection that . . ." instead of "Smith objects that (or objects to). . . ." One writer stretched a simple "Thank you" to "I wish to assure you that it has been a great pleasure to have been the recipient of your gracious generosity."

The good letter writer avoids both bromides and pompous wording to make his letters natural. The advice to "write as you talk" can be taken too literally, however. You would have an extremely hard job trying to write just as you talk; and, even if you could, the informal style appropriate to letters is more precise and concise than good conversation. What the advisers really mean is that you should not stiffen up, use big words and trite expressions, or get involved in complicated and formal sentences when you write letters. Rather, let the words flow out naturally and informally in phrases and sentences with the general tone and rhythm of the language actually used by men rather than stuffed shirts.

*Write like this—*

many people

know well

object

wait

*Not like this—*

a substantial segment of the population

fully cognizant of

interpose an objection

hold in abeyance

*Write like this—*

carry out the policy

as you requested

before, after

get the facts

ask him

find it hard to

big difference

begin (or start)

complete (or finish)

in the first place

Haste makes waste

*Not like this—*

effectuate (or implement) the pol-  
icy

pursuant to your request

prior to, subsequent to

ascertain (secure) the data

interrogate him

encounter difficulty in

marked discrepancy

initiate (or institute)

consummate

in the initial instance

Precipitation entails negation of  
economy

### ***Vary Sentence Pattern, Type, and Length to Avoid Monotony.***

Unvaried sentence pattern, type, length, or rhythm causes many a reader's mind to wander. Though the necessary variety should come naturally from writing well, revision can sometimes enliven your style by removing a dull sameness.

The normal English sentence pattern is subject-verb-complement. Most of your sentences should follow that sequence; but if all of them do, they produce monotony. Particularly noticeable are series of sentences all beginning the same way. The following list suggests possible variations of sentence beginnings:

With a subject: A simple way of keying returns is the use of different return envelopes with the several different letters being tested.

With a clause: Because human beings are unpredictable, the sales process cannot be riveted to a formula.

With a phrase: For this reason, no large mailing should be made until tests have proved which letter is best.

With a verb: Should you find that all pull about the same, you have the usual direct-mail dilemma!

With correlative conjunctions: Not only the war situation but also the results of progressive education methods in secondary schools for the last fifteen years will continue to lower the caliber of work in American colleges.

With an adverb: Ordinarily, students like courses in business letter writing.

With a verbal: Allowing plenty of time, the student started his report early in the semester.

With an infinitive: To be a successful business letter writer, a student must be able to lose himself in contemplation of his reader's problem.

With adjectives: Congenial and co-operative, he worked many nights until midnight when we faced a deadline.

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Proper emphasis of ideas is the main reason for varying sentence type, but the variation also avoids monotony and retains interest. An important idea calls for statement in one independent clause (a simple sentence). Sometimes, however, you have two equally important and closely related ideas; so you should put two independent clauses together in a compound sentence. If you have two related ideas of different importance, a complex sentence of one independent clause and one dependent shows the real relationship. Choosing sentence patterns in terms of needed emphasis will nearly always result in enough variety to prevent monotony.

Sameness of sentence length (and to some extent, paragraph length) can be just as monotonous as unvarying sentence pattern and type. Together they produce an interest-killing rhythm characteristic of a childish style. Children's books put both listener and reader to sleep—but business letters are not intended to.

Though readability specialists have done a lot of good by inducing some people to keep their sentences down to reasonable length, they have done some harm by leading others who have misunderstood them to write too mechanically in trying to average about 12–16 words a sentence. That is an *average*, remember. Nothing could be more monotonous than a series of 14-word sentences—or of 6-word sentences or of 26-word sentences. Lack of variety in sentence length can be just as monotonous as lack of variety in sentence pattern or type.

### **How to Make Your Writing Clear**

The strongest rebuke a reader can give a writer is "I don't understand; what do you mean?"

Obviously, your message must be clear to your reader, or the interest which induced him to read it accounts for nothing. Conciseness helps clarity, as well as interest, by relieving your reader of the necessity for separating the important from the unessential; and vividness helps by giving a sharp, clear picture. But other more important aids to clearness are

1. Making your writing easy to read
2. Planning for unity, coherence, progress, and proper emphasis
3. Using accurate wording, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.

***Make It Easy to Read.*** Readability is a factor affecting interest, but it is more intimately related to clarity. You have the responsibility as a writer to present ideas so that they are understood with the least possible effort. As the difficulty of understanding an idea increases, people are more inclined to skip it. Any time your reader has to back up and reread or has to slow down to understand you thor-

oughly, you are risking the chance that he will go on and misunderstand, or make the effort and get the point but become disgusted with you, or lose interest and toss your letter aside.

Using only those *words which your reader will understand* immediately and sharply is a first step in making letters easy to read. You will usually be wise to choose the more commonly known of two words; an uneducated person will understand you, and an educated reader will appreciate your making his reading job easy. Though some short words are not well known and some long ones are common knowledge, your letters will be easier to read if you use one-syllable words most of the time. If you have more than 50 per cent more syllables than words, your writing requires more reader effort than it should. And the greater number of polysyllabic profundities you use, the greater the likelihood that you'll strike your reader as a pompous ass.

*Keeping your sentences reasonably short and direct* will also help to make your letters easy to read and hence clear. An average of 16–20 words is a healthy one for readability. But you need not avoid sentences of 4 or 5 words—or 40, if necessary for presenting an idea exactly. If the average length is not too much above 20, more important than the word count are smooth sequence of thought and directness. A good test to help avoid involved, indirect sentences is to look at the punctuation. It cannot make a basically bad sentence into a good one. If you have to punctuate a sentence heavily, you will be wise to rephrase it more directly. Sometimes the best solution is to break it up into two or three.

*Paragraph pattern and length* influence readability, too. The usual pattern of letter paragraphs is a topic sentence followed by supporting or developing details. But if you write one sentence which says all you need to on that topic, start another paragraph rather than pad one with needless stuff or cover two topics in it because some composition books ban single-sentence paragraphs.

Frequently a single-sentence paragraph is highly desirable to give an idea the emphasis you want!

Especially in letters, long paragraphs are uninviting and hard to read. First and last paragraphs of more than four lines and others of more than eight should be reconsidered for breaking up.

*Frequent personal references* (names of people and pronouns referring to them) also make your letters more interesting and readable. Since you and your reader are the two persons most directly involved in the action, desires, and benefits you write about in letters, most of your pronouns will be "you" (or "you" understood) and "I" (or "we").

*Itemizations and tabulations* may help to make your whole letter

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or a paragraph clear and easy to read. For instance, if your topic sentence says that there are three big advantages in using XYZ wafers, the three will stand out more clearly if you number them and list them on separate lines.

### ***Plan for Unity, Coherence, Progress, and Proper Emphasis.***

Later you will study planning for psychological effect as a principle of persuasion; but planning also affects clarity. If you are answering a letter, underscore points in it to be covered. In any case, think your answer through before you start to write; you can't plan anything more than a simple letter by just thinking as you write. Clear letters are usually the product of a three-step process which stresses organization and coherence:

1. Preliminary planning for unity, progress, and proper emphasis
2. Continuous fast writing or dictating for the natural coherence that comes from following a chain of thought straight through
3. Revision for tone (see pp. 83 ff.), conciseness (pp. 57 ff.), coherence, and correctness (pp. 607 ff. and 74 ff.)

The preliminary-planning step requires specific answers to four questions:

1. What effect do I want the letter to produce? Decide specifically what you want to happen as a result of your letter, and make this central purpose clear to your reader. Without keeping the central purpose in mind, you cannot achieve one of the main objectives of organizing—unity. That is, good organization should result in a oneness by showing how every part is related to the general theme or idea.
2. Who is the reader? Until you make a clear estimate of what your reader is like, you cannot hope to apply the principles of adaptation (p. 109).
3. What facts and ideas must I present to produce the desired effect on this kind of reader? You should list not only points of positive interest but probable reader objections to be overcome.
4. What is the best order of presenting the items listed in answer to Question 3? You will be prepared to answer generally as Plan A, B, or C (from your study of "Planned Presentation," pp. 101-6). But that is only a general plan for the whole letter. Organization includes much more than that.

You can organize well only by answering all four of the questions in preliminary planning. Good organization is the marshaling of statements and supporting details, the orderly procession of paragraphs, the disposition of parts so that each finds its proper place.

Fundamentally, organization is the process of grouping things according to likeness and then putting the groups into an appropriate sequence. For example, if you explain in your letter or report how something is made, you should treat that part fully before going on

to explain how it operates. Either of these topics may be just one paragraph, or it may be several. But you do want to group together all the details about how it is made before proceeding. Thus you achieve unity of that topic.

Having grouped according to likenesses, you have several choices of sequence for either a whole letter or a paragraph. Common paragraph sequences are general-to-specific, cause-to-effect, order-of-importance, nearest-to-farthest (space relations), and order-of-happening (time relations). All of these may be reversed.

In the second step of writing well-organized letters—continuous fast writing—you merely follow your preliminary plan and *keep going*. Write the entire letter without stopping.

In the third step—revising—you may need to reorganize a bit by shifting words, sentences, or whole paragraphs into better position. But usually the main work on organization through revision will be a few changes in wording for better coherence. You may find that some transitional words are unnecessary because of the natural, logical sequence of the sentence and paragraph; or you may need to strengthen coherence by inserting more transitional words like *and*, *but*, *for*, and the variants of each (see **Coh 3** in Appendix A). Although you do not leave out any necessary bridges between parts, the fewer you can use and make the sequence of thought clear, the better. Try especially to avoid overformal transitions like *the latter*, *the above-mentioned*, and *namely*.

**Use Accurate Wording, Punctuation, Grammar, and Sentence Structure.** Proper usage of words, punctuation, and grammar is established by convention, not rules. The important thing is that you use them in writing with the exact significance the reader attaches to them. Words, for example, are mere labels which we apply to actions and things. In Great Britain such simple words as *ton* and *gallon* do not mean the same as they do in the United States.

Moreover, words and sentences sometimes change meanings according to what precedes and succeeds them. For instance, a would-be secretary brought laughs when the last two sentences of her ad for a job read: "No bad habits. Willing to learn." Similarly, the last two sentences in an ad of a big dog for sale read: "Will eat anything. Loves children." For proper word relations, guard particularly against the errors discussed in **Mod 1** and **2** in Appendix A.

The difficulties of accurate expression are increased by the fact that words pick up related meanings and personal significances from everyday use (connotations, in addition to their denotations or dictionary meanings). Consider the differences between *cheap* and *inexpensive* or between *house* and *home*. And note that *hope*, *trust*, and *if* all suggest doubt. "You claim" or "you say" even suggests doubt of the

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reader's truthfulness. The accurate user of words will be alert to connotations and implications—if not to avoid confusion, at least to produce effectiveness.

Exceptional cases of failure to follow the conventions have led to readers' getting a completely wrong idea. But rarely does such failure leave a reader confused; usually he can figure out approximately what the meaning is. Of course, if you say *profit* for what is generally spoken of as the "selling price," you will mislead your reader.

Much more frequently, unconventional usage of words confuses a reader temporarily, causes him to back up and reread, or leaves him uncertain of the writer's intention. The words you use should give him not only the general idea but the precise idea quickly. If you say *soon* or *later*, your reader doesn't know just when you mean. If you say checks, notes, stocks, etc., nobody can tell whether you mean to include bonds. (In most business letters *etc.* should be used only if its meaning is perfectly clear, as in "I am particularly interested in the odd-numbered questions, 1, 3, 5, etc." But it then becomes unnecessary, as it usually does when it is clear.) If you are inclined to write *actuarially*, most readers will get the meaning more quickly if you write *statistically*. The advantage of an extensive vocabulary is that you can choose the precise word to give the exact idea. But if you don't use judgment with a big vocabulary, you sometimes use words that leave the reader in the dark or slow him up.

Punctuation marks, like words, mean only what a reader takes them to mean. They can be helpful to him by breaking your sentences into thought groups if you follow the conventions and use them as they are generally used. But if you use a system of your own which your reader does not understand, you mislead him just as if you used words in unfamiliar senses.

For instance, if put up a sign on a parking lot to mean  
**No Parking: Reserved for Our Customers,**  
you will certainly mislead people if you write it

**No Parking Reserved for Our Customers.**

Fortunately, the system of English punctuation is pretty well established (by convention, not by rules), and most readers know at least the main parts of the conventions. Unfortunately, many people who know how to *read* punctuation marks correctly do not know the conventions well enough to use them precisely *in writing*. If you have any doubts about the following main troublesome areas of punctuation, see the symbol **P** in Appendix A for explanation and illustration:

—Semicolon between independent clauses except with strong conjunction;

- Comma after all dependent clauses at the beginnings of sentences and with nonessential ones elsewhere;
- Comma to separate co-ordinate adjectives;
- Pair of commas around a parenthetical expression unless you want to de-emphasize by parentheses, emphasize by dashes, or avoid confusion with other commas by using parentheses or dashes;
- Hyphen between words used as a single modifier of a following noun or pronoun.

So-called "errors" in grammar and sentence structure probably mislead readers even less frequently than unconventional uses of words and punctuation; but they, too, slow up reading and produce indefiniteness. Of course, the statement "Strawberries should not be planted where tomatoes have been grown for several years" will mislead readers if you mean "Wait several years before planting strawberries where tomatoes have been grown." And the dangling participle in "Smelling of liquor, the officer arrested the reckless driver" might cause a policeman to be asked why he was drinking on duty. But those are exceptional cases of bad sentence structure. Faulty pronoun references can confuse, too; but usually they don't. Most readers will understand perfectly, despite shifts in number like "The Acme Company is located in Chicago. They manufacture. . . ." Wrong verb forms like "He come to my house at 10 P.M." or the wrong choice between *lie* and *lay* are usually definite, quick, and clear. Even this ungrammatical question asked at a state-line road-block is perfectly clear: "You-all ain't a-totin' no cottonseeds, is ya?"

Indeed, poor grammar and sentence structure are so infrequently causes of confusion that they hardly need be discussed in connection with clarity. The other factors already discussed are more important influences on clarity; and grammar and sentence structure are more important as factors of the third requirement of good letter style—that it be inconspicuous.

### How to Keep Your Style Inconspicuous

An obvious striving for "style" is a sign of immaturity. When a reader starts your letter, he is looking for what you say, not to see how you say it. He will notice your style only if you do something unexpected with it. In reading a well-ordered sentence, he will receive no jolt. But if he consciously responds to an expression as an artificiality, he is distracted and you lose his attention to your message. Simplicity and naturalness are good guides on the right road.

If you make your style too flowery, formal, or stiff for the situation or if you make it too flippant and familiar, it will distract the reader from your message and cause him to question your sense of appropriateness. If you violate any of the conventions of word choice,

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spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, or grammar, the unconventional practice will both distract him and cause him to doubt your general knowledge and ability. For instance, if you cause the reader to say, "Why, he can't even spell," the *even* strongly implies "So, of course, he can't be depended on to know anything else either."

The two main ways a writer does something unexpected with style and thus draws undue attention to it, then, are

1. Choosing the wrong level of usage for the situation
2. Violating any of the more common conventions of word choice, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.

Both weaken the impact of your message—the important thing.

**Choose the Right Level of Usage for the Situation.** Language appropriateness, like proper dress, is a highly variable thing. What is effective in one situation may not be suitable in another. Formal dress is no better for a day in the office or a weiner roast than a business suit or sports clothing is for a formal party, or beach togs for anywhere except on the beach.

The first step in choosing the right level of usage is to analyze the situation in the light of the five communication factors (sometimes called the "communication formula"):

1. A writer (or speaker) who has
2. A particular message to communicate through
3. A medium (letter, report, advertisement) to
4. A definite readership (or audience) for
5. A definite purpose.

If any of the factors of communication change, the situation shifts so that a formerly good sentence may become bad, or vice versa. Still, many thoughtless writers almost ignore the last two factors. Only in view of all of them can you classify the situation and choose the appropriate level of usage.

Having classified the communication situation, you can take the second step in choosing the appropriate level of usage by considering the nature of the different levels. Whole books have been written naming and describing them. More concise treatments also appear in some modern college composition books (like Perrin's *Writer's Guide and Index to English*). Some linguists distinguish as many as seven levels, but a more usual classification names three: formal, informal, and illiterate (sometimes called "vulgate").

*Informal English* is much the most useful level for letters and for most other kinds of speaking and writing today. In it, the writer's interest is more on content than on style. The emphasis is more on being functional than on being elegant. Its general tone is that of the natural speech of educated people in their usual business and

social affairs. In its written form it is more concise and more precise than normal conversation; but its vocabulary, phrasing, sentence structure, grammar, and hence its natural rhythm and tone are essentially the same as in good conversation among educated people. That—rather than a literal interpretation of the words—is the meaning of the often-heard advice that you should write as you talk.

But informal English is a broad category, ranging all the way from a style which verges on formal English to that which verges on the illiterate. When informal English approaches the formal, it does not allow slang, shop talk, contractions, or omission of relative pronouns and other connecting words. It may use generally understood allusions, figures of speech a little more complex than similes, and words and sentences that are somewhat long. Some writers insist on the highly questionable requirement of impersonal style (no pronouns referring to writer or reader) for reports and research papers at this dignified-informal level of usage.

Near the deep end of the informal level of usage is what we call "familiar-informal." Its whole attention should be on content, to the disregard of style. It's O.K. if you're writing to a guy you know pretty well or if you have a lot in common with him. It is used where there is no need to establish your dignity or your knowledge of the language. Even Churchill and Roosevelt sometimes joshed each other quite a bit in their messages. As in this paragraph, it uses contractions, a light touch, and rather simple sentence structure and words, including some slang and shop talk. Its value is its freshness, vividness, emphasis, and naturalness. The danger point, which this paragraph flirts with, is that it will be abused in an attempt to be clever and thus will call attention to itself.

*Formal English* is characterized by precision and elegance of diction, sentence structure, and grammar. Like the man dressed in formal clothes, it often appears stiff and unnatural, more to be admired for its appearance than for any function it may perform. It admits of no contractions, ellipses, or indignities of any kind. Of necessity, it uses many everyday words, but by design it includes many that are not commonly heard. Like the man of high society, it sometimes chooses its associates with more attention to their paternity than to what they are. As a consequence, its words are frequently somewhat rare and long, with histories traceable back to the first word families of Old French or Latin. It is often fraught with abstruse literary and historical allusions. Instead of concerning itself with facilitating the reader's comprehension, it often uses long and involved sentences that are more elegant and rhythmical than functional. Following an unsound belief that they are thereby being more objective, its writers usually strive for an impersonal style. Its worst misguided practi-

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tioners—some lawyers, doctors, engineers, and politicians—apparently hoping to achieve dignity (and defending their practices by claiming that they achieve precision)—frequently abuse acceptable formal English by carrying it to the ridiculous extremes of the too technical, the pompous, and the flatulent (now commonly called “gobbledygook” or “bafflegab”).

Abused formal English has no reason for being. Even in its best sense, formal English is nearly always unsuitable for business letters. It would be noticed as inappropriate in all but the most formal occasions.

*The illiterate level of usage* is the third one of them three we dun named. It ain't got no bizness in letters. Ya see, folks who reads letters spects you ta right right. If'n ya writes wrong, he shore sees ya errors and knows ya ain't eddicated so he thinks ya don't know nuthin else neither if ya cain't get yer rightin right.

An easy way to choose the appropriate level of usage for a situation you have analyzed is to ask yourself which type of dress would be most suitable if you were going to see your reader and talk your message to him. If the answer is formal dress, choose formal English or dignified-informal. If the answer is an everyday business suit, use the broad middleground of informal English. If the answer is sporty clothes, use familiar-informal. Only if you are the kind of person who goes to church in dirty work clothes should you feel comfortable while revealing your illiteracy by violating the writing conventions expected of educated people.

**Follow the Conventions.** We have already seen how following the conventions of wording, punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar affects clarity. But violations of those and other conventions have an even more important bearing on keeping your style inconspicuous. If you go contrary to the conventions, you do something your reader doesn't expect of an educated writer. You therefore distract his attention from your message and lose his respect and his faith in you.

Even the following first paragraph in a letter from a hotel man to an association president is clear. You know what the writer means, despite his poor sentence, but you are distracted and you can't respect him:

Your recent convention over with and successful, we are wondering if since then you have decided on the next year's meeting city, and you jotting down on the margin of this letter the city and dates selected, this will be indeed appreciated.

From that, don't you get the impression that if he is so sloppy about his language, his hotel might not be a very well-run, clean place to stay?

*Spelling* is probably the most exactly established convention in the English language. A few words are spelled two ways, but most of them are listed only one way in the dictionary. Because of this definiteness, spelling has acquired much more importance in the minds of most people than it deserves. Though a misspelled word almost never leads to confusion and therefore makes little difference in terms of real communication, most readers (even relatively uneducated ones) will notice your errors and look down on you for them. So, unless you prefer to write in other languages (nearly all of which have more systematic and easier-to-learn spelling), you had better accept your fate and learn English spelling.

Because it is so unsystematic, there is no easy way. Consider yourself fortunate if you have learned to spell by observing the words you read and by listening closely to how words are pronounced. If you have not used those methods, you should start now; but don't assume that pronunciation is always a safe guide. (See **Sp** in Appendix A.)

*Poor word choice* that is close enough to meet the basic requirement of clarity is usually not so noticeable as misspelling, but it may be distracting and even degrading. Among the thousands of possible bad choices, the pairs listed under **Diction** in Appendix A give the most trouble. If you are unsure of any of the distinctions, look up the words; any educated reader will notice if you confuse them.

*Unconventional punctuation* may lead to misunderstanding, but more frequently it distracts and retards the reader. If you have trouble with it, study the material under **P** in Appendix A.

*Grammar and sentence structure* are so closely related that they should be considered together. They have a definite bearing on clarity (where they have been discussed, p. 69), but they have more significance in terms of making your style inconspicuous. Most of the troubles come from one or more of a writer's

- Having heard uneducated people speak unconventionally, particularly his family and fellow workers (solution: observe the skill of other writers and speakers, study writing, practice)
- Simple carelessness (solution: revision) or
- Trying to use big words and complicated sentence structures before mastering them (solution: remember that they are unnecessary to dignity; write simply, at least until you can use more involved structures precisely and clearly).

In trying to keep your style unnoticed by avoiding violations of the conventions of good English, you would have an easier job if all your readers were modern linguists. One of them (R. C. Pooley, *Teaching English Usage* [New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1946], p. 14) says:

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Good English is . . . appropriate to the purpose . . . , true to the language . . . , and comfortable to [the writer and reader]. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.

Language scholars like Pooley know that many of the so-called “rules” of English are

- Latin rules foisted off on English by early writers who knew Latin and thought English should follow the same system, and
- Rules concocted to systematize English by people who ignored the true nature and history of the language.

Here is a realistic interpretation of some points that language scholars make in contradiction to statements of some less well-informed people:

- A split infinitive is undesirable only if it is awkward or unclear.
- And, but, and so* are good sentence beginnings if they deserve the emphasis they get there. The same applies to *however* and other transitional words, but some people object only to *and, but, and so*.
- Prepositions are perfectly good at the ends of sentences if you want them to have that much emphasis.
- One-sentence paragraphs are perfectly good. The ban on them is nonsense. Often a one-sentence paragraph, especially the first or last in a letter, is just what it should be.
- Passive voice is usually undesirable because it is weak, wordy, and awkward; but it has been retained in the language because it is useful in some situations (to avoid direct accusations, for example). To ban it completely is high-handed.
- Colloquial expressions and slang are important and useful parts of the language; when the situation calls for the informal level of usage, they can improve language effectiveness.
- Many a word has several possible meanings when used alone; but if the context makes the interpretation readily clear and definite, to ban use of those words or to limit them (*while, since*, for example) to one use is unrealistic and lordly.
- The distinctions between *shall* and *will* are almost completely gone except in formal English; *will* is much more widely used.

Unfortunately, not all your readers will have studied courses on the history of the language and modern English usage or have read books such as Baugh's and Pooley's on those subjects. Many of them will have been misled by linguistically unsound books and teachers. But

they will *think* they know what is right and wrong. If you don't do what they think is right, you will distract them and lose their respect.

If you are writing to someone likely to be linguistically misinformed, then we advise you to adhere to the widespread, though unsound, "rules" when you can do so easily. Otherwise, we suggest that you forget the unjustifiable restrictions on the language and give your attention to the more important aspects of good style—interest, clarity, and inconspicuousness through adherence to the universally accepted conventions.

Appendix A covers some common violations of these conventions and gives suggestions for avoiding criticism.

*[All the letter problems for the first four chapters are at the end of Part Two because we think you should cover all four basic tests of a good business letter before trying to write any kind of letter. We urge you to read the first four chapters quickly but thoroughly so that you can put all the basic principles to use even in your first letter.]*

*[Since you will remember the principles of good style better if you practice them while concentrating on them alone, however, you may profit by working through at least some of the following exercises.]*

## EXERCISES

Determine what is not good about the sentences and rewrite them or be prepared to discuss them, as your teacher directs. You may also benefit by finding (in Appendix A) the appropriate symbol(s) for criticism of each sentence and reading the discussion of the symbol(s).

1. (From an ad.) Solid oak posture chairs for secretaries with built-in padding.
2. No lawyer ever learned all the law he practices in the college in which he studied.
3. (From a report on rain-making.) The responsible scientists of the project interpret the long series of experiments to mean that recently proposed artificial weather modification processes are of relatively little economic importance.
4. According to the trade journal *Trusts and Estates*, a greater percentage of common stocks are now included in the investment portfolios of more than 3,000 banks in the United States.
5. To me, this trend toward greater holding of common stocks in banks' portfolios is very surprising and confirms my opinion that the Dow Jones averages, Barron's Business Gauge, and the Security Exchange Commission, which all predict bear market conditions, overstate the extent of our present business recession.
6. There are some milling machine manufacturers that I was unable to

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contact or that did not answer my letter, however, the figures here cover all the major producers in this area.

7. My own evaluation of Honeywells is the same as that of the authors and should be installed in our plant.
8. It was found that there are 12 main reasons why goods are returned. The most significant of these being entirely or almost entirely customer faults. The 12 reasons are: . . . .
9. When buying from an equipment supplier the prices might be a bit higher than these but would include shipping charges.
10. The size of the plant and the nature of its hazards determines the fire brigade set-up necessary.
11. While the clothing field has a large number of returns and is a good place to start it is not at all representative of the whole retailing world.
12. The channel of distribution being utilized most is the use of a traveling sales force.
13. Mr. Johnson insists on neat accurate work.
14. Because of its greater tensil, tear, and bursting strength, it assures less shutdowns in the packaging line.
15. In order to understand how this method of distribution would achieve its purpose an analysis of it is necessary.
16. While I worked with the fire crew I was only involved in one run.
17. Unless the Office of Price Administration or an authorized representative thereof shall, by letter mailed to the applicant within 21 days from the date of filing application, disapprove the requested increase in the maximum price, such price increase shall be deemed to have been approved, subject to nonretroactive written disapproval or adjustment at any later time by the Office of Price Administration.
18. Common stock can be classified under three main types. These types are: 1) income stocks, 2) cyclical stocks, and 3) growth stocks.
19. The report describes the method of operation of the hydrogen plant and a brief discussion of the Girbotol process.
20. The weight of the machines range from 6,000–6,400 pounds.
21. List the names of individuals who should receive copies at the left margin.
22. Costs of cleaning materials, Windex and rags were considered negligible and not computed.
23. Seasonal resort investments may often lay idle for as many as eight months out of the year.
24. The consensus of opinion from members of the committee was that polyethylene had a high probability of meeting the requirements.
25. This gives the company that chooses the paper bag more versatility in their packaging line.
26. Not only is this welder useful in the manufacture of products but also in repairing of equipment where replacement of the damaged parts is expensive.
27. By adjusting the screws, the spirit bubble may be centered in its tube.
28. "Nonconference" groups are those comprised of individuals that are

- brought together as a result of their association or relationship to the university (i.e., football team).
- 29. It has been enjoyable making this study for you, as it is a subject I've wanted to learn more about.
  - 30. Arc welding has some advantages over other methods: easier wedge preparation, faster welding speed and it eliminates the use of flux.
  - 31. I am of the opinion that before investing funds in personnel and equipment for such a center, certain pilot projects ought to be undertaken to determine the value of such a project.
  - 32. The report is designed primarily to show the particular need existing in Latin America and recommending a possible solution for it.
  - 33. Included in the shipment are three small one ounce packages and one big 16 ounce package of Alpha bits.
  - 34. Mr. Rich's recommendation for this versatile work was the Brown & Sharpe because he felt it required the least upkeep of the two machines.
  - 35. A complete cost, both initial and operational, estimate will be presented.
  - 36. The varied kinds of work we can perform includes: property surveys, staking out of substations, taking elevations for contours, and steel inventories.
  - 37. The table contains a schedule giving the exact lengths of pipe to be used and also shows the valves and fittings that are needed.
  - 38. The observers were very interested in large projectiles, especially the 4-inch model for aircraft that weighed about 18 pounds.
  - 39. There are three types of meters used. There is the ammeter which measures current, the wattmeter which measures power and the voltmeter which measures the voltage or electrical pressure.
  - 40. After the grain leaves the separator it falls to a screw conveyor, and then this conveyor carries it to one of eight bins for storage.
  - 41. The purpose of the program was set up for the improvement of reading rate and the improvement of reading comprehension.
  - 42. Direct questions will put one on guard, but an impersonal simple questionnaire does not arouse defense mechanisms nor create inhibitions.
  - 43. The subcontractors draw the final detailed plans which are called shop drawings for their men in the field.
  - 44. An attempt to explain each individual type would be a long tiring thing both from the standpoint of the reader and myself.
  - 45. After the concrete has hardened the forms are removed from the walls.
  - 46. According to population studies by the Bureau of Social Studies which were published in 1955 the population of Latin America will reach 321 million persons by 1980 if it continues at the present rate of increase.
  - 47. The other type uses the hot escaping exhaust fumes to turn a turbine.
  - 48. Inside the tube is also placed a tiny drop of mercury and a small amount of argon gas.
  - 49. Information on the subject was only available in technical journals.

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50. He is an all-purpose individual, doing janitorial work, repairs on equipment and minor repairs on the physical plant.
51. While working in Plant 4, fireproof coveralls and protective glasses are issued as a safety measure.
52. The supermarket manager who can get customers in the habit of shopping in Fowler can plan on a good stable business for many years to come.
53. The business district in that area is El Cajon and it has its own police force in it.
54. This highly satisfactory garbage can is made by the Jordan Company who have been known for years for their outstanding products.
55. The polyethylene derives two advantages here which are:
  - a) Heat sealing made possible by its use speeds up the process.
  - b) Economy of eliminating excess material.
56. A report is a communication of fact-supported ideas; if you do not communicate the ideas are of little worth.
57. The problems selected for study were chosen through personal interviews with the workers, manager and my own personal experience with the company.
58. The legislators are expected to vote bigger outlays for highways, schools, water, power, and flood-control projects, hospitals, defense, and medical research.
59. Approximately 66 per cent had made their most recent hardware purchase in Tulsa. This is an increase over previous findings of 4 per cent.
60. Thank you for your order and let us know if we can be of service again.
61. Admitting your mistake will take courage, but it is the kind of courage you must have in order eventually to succeed.
62. Minimum and average costs for various items are listed and the individual costs may vary according to taste, budget and needs.
63. Mr. Summerfield did not bother to elucidate his assertion that the mail service was badly disorganized nor his claim that all is well now.
64. At the first registration, all students must pay a \$5 deposit to the Bursar which will be returned to the student upon leaving the University.
65. In order to satisfy you completely, will you check your preference on the enclosed card?
66. In conformance with our conversation on March 30, 1959, the *Report of the Uranium Corporation* has been reviewed, to determine wherein the operations of the Corporation may have been presented inadequately; further, suggested changes in format, illustrations, and treatment of text have been developed, for consideration in the preparation of subsequent reports.
67. Simply check your choice on the return card and immediately upon receiving your preference, the typewriter will be on the way to you.
68. You might also show accounts receivable, long-term accounts, and discuss the future outlook.

69. The evaluation of these problems were made by the Department of Market Research.
70. The high pressure air then rushes into the cylinder carrying the oil charge with it.
71. Maybe direct-mail selling could be used as a complimentary device in marketing our product.

# III. Good Will: How the Reader Feels

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## 1 Tone

### a Acceptable Balance of Personalities

- Undue Humility
- Flattery
- Condescension
- Preachiness
- Bragging

### b Courtesy

- Anger
- Accusations
- Unflattering Implications
- Sarcasm
- Curtness
- Stereotyped Language
- Physical Appearance

### c Sincerity

- Effusiveness
- Exaggeration
- Undue Familiarity

## 2 Service Attitude

### a Resale Material

### b Sales-promotional Material

### c Special Good-will Letters

Most BUSINESS PEOPLE define good will as "the disposition of customers to return to the place where they have been treated well." Look it up in your dictionary, however, and you'll find friendly, positive words like *kindly feeling*, *benevolence*, *cheerful consent*, *heartiness*, and *cordiality*. A business letter helps to produce that positive disposition in the reader by developing his friendly, confident feeling toward the firm and the writer representing it.

No business firm or individual would intentionally drive away present or possible future customers by creating ill will or by seeming indifferent. For lack of conscious effort to build good will, however, many letter writers do drive customers away. Proper tone and the

service attitude are the methods of winning the reader's friendliness and confidence—that is, his good will or disposition to return to you because you have treated him well.

## Tone

No doubt you have heard someone complain, "It isn't *what* he said—it's the *way* he said it!" Inflections and modulations of the voice, facial expressions, hand gestures—all affect the tone or over-all impression of a spoken remark almost as much as the words do, sometimes even more. The point applies in writing, too—especially in writing letters, the most personal, me-to-you kind of writing. If you want your letters to build good will, you *will make a conscious effort to control the tone*.

Basic to a desirable tone in letters is a balance of personalities (writer's and reader's) acceptable to both. Without an attitude of mutual respect, you will have difficulty achieving in your letters the other two qualities necessary for good tone—courtesy and sincerity.

**Acceptable Balance of Personalities.** As a writer of good business letters you will need to subordinate your own wishes, reactions, and opinions; the suggestion, "Make it BIG YOU and little me," can be overdone, however. Anything you say that looks up to or down on the reader will throw the relationship off balance.

*Undue humility* usually backfires. Such a fawning, servile tone as in the following is unwise because it is obviously insincere sounding; no reader expects a writer to have such a humble opinion of himself:

I'm sorry to ask a busy man like you to take his valuable time to help me; but without your help I do not know how to proceed. Since you are a world authority on . . . , and I know nothing about it. . . .

In addition to the insincere implications, it also suggests an incompetent person whose request for advice is hardly worth considering.

*Flattery* is another reason why readers question the sincerity or integrity of some writers, especially when it is obvious flattery in connection with the writer's attempt to get the reader to do something or to keep buying. Passing deserved compliments or giving credit where credit is due is something else; it is expected of anybody except a boor. But the reader, sure that the writer has an axe to grind, discounts such passages as the following:

Your keen discrimination in the matter of footwear is evidenced in your order of the 9th.

You and you alone can give us the information we need about Gullett razors.

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Your eminent position in commercial aviation, Mr. Pogue, is the subject of much admiration.

~~~~~  
Your meteor-like rise in the field of retailing, Mr. Bowan, . . .

~~~~~  
When an Atlanta girl marries, she immediately thinks of Rich's, the merchandising cynosure of the South!

Flattery also embarrasses many readers and makes them uncomfortable even in the privacy of reading a letter. Instead of gaining favor, the writer loses face and the reader's faith. (When you want to indicate your awareness of the reader's position or accomplishment, handle the reference subordinately.) The writer who began his letter with

You are receiving this questionnaire because you are an authority in the retailing field.

got off to a bad start because of the obviousness of his flattery. He might well have revised his sentence this way:

As an authority in retailing, how do you think the passage of HR-818 will affect co-ops?

Before this reader has time to feel irritation or embarrassment over the initial phrase (it's so short and touched so lightly that he may experience a faint glow of satisfaction), he is forced into a consideration of an impersonal point. Handling a compliment subtly is frequently a question of inserting a complimentary phrase in a statement that, to all appearances, is intended primarily to accomplish something else. The indirect compliments in the following openings imply that the reader's opinion is worth seeking but have no obvious flattery:

How, in your opinion, will passage of HR-818 affect co-ops?

~~~~~  
After successful experience in the field, would you say that there is any single area of preparation more important than others for effective public-relations work?

More frequent than undesirable humility and flattery, however, is a writer's implication of too much respect for himself and too little for his reader. Lack of that respect usually reflects itself in (1) condescension ("talking down" to the other person), (2) preachiness (didacticism is another word for it), and (3) bragging.

*Condescension* is quick evidence that the writer considers himself superior to his reader and maybe does not even respect him. Almost everybody has a good share of self-respect. Nobody wants to be considered a nobody and looked down on or talked down to.

Yet, in attempting to be big-hearted, a businessman insulted his reader when he wrote, "It is unlikely that the machine is defective, but a firm of our size and standing can afford to take it back and give you a new one." In the same category go the sentences, "I am surprised that you would question the adjustment procedure of a firm like Blank's" or "You are apparently unaware of the long history of satisfactory customer relations at Blank's." The statement "We shall allow you to" has condescending connotations that are not present in "We shall be glad to" or "Certainly you may."

A particular danger lies in writing to children, who certainly are not lacking in respect for their own ways of looking at things. When the secretary of a boys' club requested that a department-store manager contribute some boxing gloves to the club, the manager answered: "When you grow up to have the heavy business responsibilities I have and you're asked for contributions by all kinds of charitable organizations, you'll understand why I cannot make a donation to your club." The boy's vocabulary failed him, but what he tried to express was "That pompous ass!" And to make matters worse, the manager began his next sentence with "You are probably unaware . . ."

A slightly different form of condescending attitude crops up in application letters in a statement like "You may call me at Sheldrake 4601." The implication is that the writer is permitting the reader a privilege when just the opposite is true. An applicant is in no position to appear so aloof.

Repeated use of such phrases as "We think," "We believe," and "We suggest" often are interpreted as condescension. The writer who reflects such a sense of superiority is almost certain to erect a barrier of incompatibility between himself and his reader. Far from attracting a reader, such egocentric talk causes him to sputter, "Well, who does he think he is?" When that happens, the good will of the reader is affected in varying degrees.

*Preachiness* (didacticism), which is an extension of condescension, is undesirable because

1. Most people (especially Americans) do not like to be bossed.
2. When you tell your reader what he ought to do, you imply that he does not know what to do, and thus you suggest your own superiority.

The juvenile-sounding marketing lecture (because it is so elementary) which some sales writers put into letters to retailers is one of the most frequent offenders. The following are typical:

The only way for you to make money is by offering your customers merchandise that has utility, good quality, and an attractive price.

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It's time for all dealers to get in their Christmas stock!

A retailer would not remain a retailer very long if he did not realize the truth of such statements and act accordingly. Whether he is an old-timer or a beginner, when he reads such preachy statements as the foregoing, his usual reaction is an emphatic negative one like "Who is he to be telling me how to run my business?" or a vigorous "Let me make my own decisions!"

When a statement is flat and obvious, it is frequently irritating to the reader, even though the intent of the writer is good, as in the following:

Satisfaction of your customers means turnover and profits to you.

You need something new and different to show your customers.

You as a business letter writer will do well to examine carefully the expressions "you want," "you need," "you should," and their variations, seeking to eliminate whenever you can without altering the meaning. The following illustration from an application letter is preachy:

The business cycle is changing from a seller's market to a buyer's market. You are going to need a strong force of good salesmen.

Here is one way it could be improved for the reader's acceptance of the idea without irritation:

Now that business is shifting from a seller's market to a buyer's market, you're no doubt thinking about the strong force of good salesmen with which you'll meet competition.

The sales writer in the following example is vague, flat, and preachy:

Spring will soon be here . . . rain in the morning, cold and clear in the afternoon. To be safe, you should carry both a topcoat and a raincoat with you every day. But that's a bother.

He could have improved his presentation this way (among others):

For these early spring days when it's raining in the morning but clearer and colder in the afternoon, a topcoat which is also a raincoat will give you protection to and from work—

—and without your having to worry each morning over "Which shall I take today?"

One of the worst examples of intellectual and psychological browbeating is this:

Do you want Davison's to keep growing and keep getting better?

Of course you do!

Then you should employ only those individuals who want to move steadily forward and push Davison's on to greater heights.

Far more likely to win the reader's approval is the following version, with positive phrasing and a studied attempt not to tell the reader how he should be running his business:

Good merchandise at the right prices is not the only reason Davison's has grown as it has in the last five years: the team of Davison men and women has been equally influential.

Careful phrasing can eliminate most of the irritant due to preachiness.

*Bragging* is another undesirable extension of the writer's ego. And as advertising and public relations improve, as well as the general educational level, bragging brings to the minds of more and more readers the sometimes comical, sometimes pitiful, sometimes disgusting, chest-pounding would-be caveman. Conscious use of superlative wording ("latest and greatest," "outstandingly superior," "final word," and others discussed in greater detail on pp. 93-94) is a flagrant and obvious way to make your reader not believe you. Most thoughtful writers will eliminate such references mentally before words get on paper. But even experienced writers annoy readers with undesirable—and almost always unsupported—references to size of the company, efficiency of operations, or quality of product. The following are examples:

In a business as large as ours—with literally thousands of retailers selling our products— . . . .

In a firm as large as Bowen and Bowen, such incidents are bound to happen.

You were unfortunately a victim of routine made necessary by the vastness of an institution so well operated as the White Sands Hotel.

You will understand, I'm sure, that it takes longer than usual when orders are handled as exactingly as we do.

All business writers will do well to remind themselves that

—silver notes never come from brass horns

and

—an ounce of fact is worth a ton of ballyhoo.

The desirable adjustment to both reader and writer (through elimination of servility, flattery, preachiness, and bragging) will help to improve the tone of your letters; but it will not assure courtesy, the second element in desirable letter tone.

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**Courtesy.** A dictionary definition of courtesy is "excellent manners or behavior; politeness." Being courteous is being considerate of the other person's feelings through exercising patience and tact. These come only from conscious and determined effort in many cases, because often one's instantaneous, unthinking reaction is an impatient or tactless expression.

Contrary to an oft-stated phrase, people are not "born courteous." (If you doubt that, spend an hour talking with almost any child.) Courtesy in letters is more easily attained by those who have been reared in a circle whose members cultivated self-respect, generosity, and forgiveness in one another; but anyone who anticipates his reader's probable reactions will soon find himself habitually writing the courteous thing.

Courtesy cannot be attained, however, as long as one gives offense. For that reason, correspondents need to keep in mind the major causes of courtesy.

*Anger* displayed is almost certain to cause loss of the reader's friendliness toward you and confidence in you. The average business reader has a good deal of self-respect and confidence in the wisdom of his own decisions. When they are attacked, he too feels a wave of anger and a consequent necessity to defend himself. The result is two people seriously estranged. Such sentences as the following are almost sure to produce that result:

We cannot understand why you are so negligent about paying bills.  
~~~~~

What's going on in the office at your place?  
~~~~~

We certainly have no intention of letting you get away with that!  
~~~~~

This is the last straw. (I've had my fill.)  
~~~~~

What are you birds up to?  
~~~~~

Why don't you wake up?

Crude slang or profanity, especially if used in connection with a display of heightened feeling, is likely to be interpreted as anger, whether or not it is intended as such. Don't use either. (And don't try to be coy and cute with quotation marks for questionable slang or dashes in words that are obviously profanity.)

Petulance (peevishness or fretfulness) is simply anger in a modified degree. It is comparable to the scoldings which children often must receive from parents (and, unfortunately, from teachers too!). Here is how a woman scolded an interior decorator: "When do you expect to return my furniture? You've had it now for more than two weeks.

That ought to be long enough to do a little upholstering job." A calm request that the work be finished as soon as possible because of the need for the furniture would probably bring just as quick action, and certainly it would leave the upholsterer in a better mood to do a good job.

Business readers have usually graduated from sand-pile psychology, too. When they read "We have played fair with you; why don't you play fair with us?" they are likely to regard the writer's whining as unnecessarily and undesirably juvenile.

Both anger and petulance are the results of impatience and the unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of successful human relations.

*Accusations*, on the other hand, are usually the result of insensitivity to how another person will react to a remark. One cannot cultivate tact (skill in dealing with others without giving offense) without a deep and almost constant concern for the feelings of others. The sensitive, thoughtful person knows that people do not like to be reminded of their carelessness or ignorance; he also knows that they will develop an unfriendliness toward the person who insists upon reminding them of their errors. The customer may not always be right, but if you are going to keep his greatest friendliness (good will), you will remember not to call attention to the error if you can avoid doing so and otherwise do it with the least likely offense (impersonal style or by implication). The writer of the following letter displayed an almost completely insensitive attitude toward his reader:

Much as we dislike doing so, we shall have to delay your order of May 12.

*You neglected* to specify which shade of sweater you desire.

Kindly check your catalog and *this time* let us know whether you want navy, midnight, or powder blue.

We have enclosed an envelope for your convenience.

The following revised version has much better tone and is thus more likely to retain the good will of the reader. It eliminates the accusation and the unfavorable reminder in the italicized words of the preceding example, the sarcasm the reader would probably read into *kindly*, and the pompous-sounding reference to the enclosure.

Since we want you to be entirely satisfied with the blue sweater you ordered May 12, will you please let us know which shade you prefer?

You may obtain the cardigan style in navy, midnight, or powder. All are popular this spring.

Just check the appropriate blank on the enclosed reply card. As soon as we receive it, we will mail your sweater.

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In this revision the reader infers his own carelessness, but he will feel more friendly toward the writer and his firm for the gentleman-like way of asking for additional information without accusing.

*Unflattering implications* are usually the result of tactlessness combined with suspicion or distrust. The collection correspondent who wrote "When we sold you these goods, we thought you were honest," implied an idea of much greater impact than the literal statement, an implication which is distinctly unflattering and thus destructive of good will.

The adjustment correspondent who writes, "We are investigating shipment of the goods *you claim* you did not receive," need not be surprised to receive a sharp reply. When he writes, "*We are surprised to receive your report*," or "*We cannot understand* why you have had trouble with the Kold-Hold when other people like it so well," he is establishing by implication his doubts of the reader's reasonableness, honesty, or intelligence.

And the sales correspondent who begins his message implying that he doubts his reader's alertness can expect few returns to his letter:

Alert hardware dealers everywhere are stocking No-Flame, the fire-resistant liquid which more and more home builders are including in their specifications.

Are you prepared to meet the demands of your home-building customers?

In similar vein, the phrases "Do you realize . . . ?" and "Surely you are . . ." immediately suggest the writer's doubts that the reader measures up on either score.

Such lack of tact is frequently unintentional. Most readers, however, do not question whether it is intentional; the result is ill will for the writer and the firm.

*Sarcasm*, on the other hand, is generally deliberate. And it is usually dangerous in business correspondence. The smile which accompanies friendly sarcastic banter cannot find its way onto paper; unfriendly sarcasm is sheer malice. It is the direct opposite of the attitude necessary for a tone of good will because it shows a lack of respect for the other fellow and a deliberate attempt to belittle him. The sales manager sending the following message to a group of salesmen falling short of their quotas would build no good will:

Congratulations on your magnificent showing!

We're only \$50,000 short this week.

How do you do it?

The Community Chest leader who included the following in his public report could hardly expect future co-operation from the division indicated:

The ABC employees, with an assigned goal of \$800, magnificently responded with \$452. Such generosity should not go unmentioned.

Sarcasm should never be used in business correspondence except between people of equal intelligence, of equal station in life, and with highly similar senses of humor. To be on the safe side, do not use it at all. The moment of triumph is short-lived; the loss of the friendship of the reader may be permanent.

*Curtness*, born of impatience and a false sense of what constitutes desirable business brevity, reflects indifference and is thus considered discourteous. The manufacturer sending the following letter was promptly labeled a boor by the woman who received it:

We have your request for our booklet and are enclosing same.

Thanking you for your interest, we are,

Better to send no letter than this. Booklets usually do a good job. And experiment after experiment has shown that a good letter accompanying a booklet increases the pulling power. On the other hand, a poor letter like this, reflecting such lack of interest, destroys some of the favorable impression made by the booklet.

That correspondent might very well have helped to convert a casual inquiry into a sale if he had taken the time to show interest in serving the customer with a letter like the following, which is superior because of the service attitude reflected, the positive and specific resale material, and the action ending (all of which are discussed later):

We're glad to send you Siesta's booklet *Color at Mealtime*.

When you read it, you'll understand why we say that in Siesta you can now have handsome dinnerware that is sturdy enough for everyday use, yet surprisingly inexpensive.

No photography, however, can do justice to the delicacy of some Siesta shades or to the brilliance of the others.

Your friendly local dealer will be glad to show you his selection of Siesta. If you want him to, he'll be glad to order additional colors for your examination.

See him soon and start enjoying Siesta's color at mealtime.

Sincerely yours,  
(Signature)

You can find Siesta in Omaha at (name and address of dealer).<sup>1</sup>

*Stereotyped language* is another mark of discourtesy because it suggests indifference. And nobody likes to have his business treated in an indifferent, routine way. Writers of letters like the following

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<sup>1</sup> This letter can easily be set up as a form letter with only this one line and the inside address and salutation individually typed.

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can expect no more feeling of friendliness from the reader than is reflected in the letter—and that is very little:

We have your favor of the 19th and in reply beg to state that the interest on your mortgage is now \$361.66.

We trust this is the information you desired, and if there is any other way we can oblige, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Since stereotyped language is primarily a question of style, it is discussed in greater detail beginning on page 63.

*Physical appearance* is one other factor affecting the apparent courtesy of letters, in the eyes of most readers. Strikeovers, poor erasures, dim type, poorly matched type and processed material, and penciled signatures are like trying to gain admission to the Stork Club when you're dressed in sweat shirt, dungarees, and sneakers. Since this point has been developed in a full section, no further mention is made here.

In putting his best foot forward through courtesy, however, a correspondent must be careful not to trip himself; the attempt to be courteous can be overdone to the point of apparent insincerity and thus destroy the third element in desirable letter tone.

*Sincerity.* When a reader feels his first flashes of doubt, with a resultant reaction of "Well, I'll take that with a grain of salt," his confidence in the writer is shaken. More than anything else, that confidence is affected by sincerity.

Sincere cordiality is entirely free of hypocrisy. It is unwillingness to exaggerate or fictionalize upon the true state of a situation. Inappropriate cordiality (usually unbelievable and sometimes distasteful) is commonly the result of effusiveness, exaggeration, and undue familiarity. (Flattery and undue humility, it is true, often sound insincere. But in our opinion they are more intimately linked with the desirable balance of personalities discussed in a preceding section.)

*Effusiveness* means gushiness. It is excessive politeness which is often insincere and always sounds insincere. "Overdone" means the same thing. Your letters can sound effusive simply because you've used too many adjectives and adverbs, as in the following examples:

We are extremely happy to place your name on our list of highly valued charge customers, and we sincerely want you to know that we have hundreds of loyal employees all very eager and anxious to serve.

Your excellent choice of our fine store for the opening of a charge account, we consider a distinct compliment to the superb quality of our merchandise and outstanding service. And we're genuinely happy about it.

I was exceptionally pleased to note your name on this morning's list of much-appreciated new charge customers.



It is indeed a pleasure for the house of LeRoi to serve you, and you may feel sure that we shall do everything possible to keep you happy.

The plain fact is that in a business relationship such highly charged personal reactions as those suggested in the foregoing examples do not exist—and any reader knows that. No writer and no firm is going to "do everything possible to keep you happy." Rarely will a credit man be "extremely happy" or "exceptionally pleased" to add a name to a charge list. Phrases like "do all we can" and simply "happy" or "pleased" are appropriate because they are believable.

Furthermore, the coy quality of the following endings is unrealistic in a business situation—and therefore unbelievable:

We do hope you'll come in soon. We can hardly wait!



Don't forget to come in soon. We'll be looking for you!



Simply note your color choice on the enclosed card, mail it to us—and then sit back with an air of expectancy.

The usual cause of effusiveness is a writer's choosing too strong and too many adjectives and adverbs in an attempt to please the reader by making him feel important. You'll do well to watch especially overused words like *very*, *indeed*, *genuinely*, *extremely*, *really*, and *truly*—all of which begin to gush in a very short time.

*Exaggeration* is stronger, and therefore more destructive of sincerity, than effusiveness. The correspondent who wrote, "Work is a pleasure when you use these precision-made tools," appears to be overstating his case to his carpenter-reader. And the writer of the following, if he could overhear, should be prepared for an unrestrained, emphatic "BOSH!" when his dealer-customer opens the letter and reads:

New customers, happy and eager to buy, will surely applaud your recent selection of four dozen Tropical Holiday play suits for women.

Especially made for the humidity of Macon, these garments will lead girls and women for miles around to tell their friends that "Thompson's has them!"

Superlatives and other forms of strong wording are among the most frequent reasons why so many letters sound exaggerated, unbelievable, and therefore insincere. The trite "more than glad" is nearly always an insincere attempt to exaggerate a simple "glad."

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And "more than happy," if translated literally, could mean only slap-happy. The classic illustration is the misguided "What could be finer than . . . ?" Applied to everything, it fits nothing. Furthermore, any reader can supply at least one quick answer of something which in his opinion is finer than the product or service mentioned. What's more, he usually does.

Exaggerated wording is nearly always challenging. Few things are actually amazing, sensational, revolutionary, ideal, best, finest, or perfect. Simple, accurate, specific statements of quality and value not only avoid the impression of insincerity; they are often more forceful than the general superlatives made nearly meaningless by sixty years of American advertising. If you describe products or services in terms like the following, you are inviting negative responses toward you and your firm:

You'll find that Loomoleum is truly the ideal low-priced floor covering.

~~~~~  
Are you looking for something that will sell like wildfire and give your customers the greatest possible satisfaction?

~~~~~  
Want Amazing Protection  
That Can Never Be Canceled?

It will take you only a few minutes to read this letter. But it may save you and your family years of untold hardship during the years ahead. Here is really a magnificent opportunity if you consider carefully the suggestion now offered—and act without delay!

Imagine a health and accident policy that can never be canceled. That is truly unusual. Nor is that all!

~~~~~  
WHAT—a lawn mower that trims around the edge of sidewalks and fences while cutting a 16-inch swath of tall grass? Amazing, of course! But look in next month's *Post* and see for yourself.

This new mower is revolutionary in build, style, performance, and customer appeal. Here is your golden opportunity!

Whether the reader of such statements feels irritation or disgust is relatively immaterial: what counts is that he does not believe them. His confidence in the writer and the house, and therefore his good will, take a sharp downturn.

*Undue familiarity* also causes a writer to lose favor with his reader in many instances. Sometimes it crops out merely because the writer is uncouth. The reader may feel sympathy for the poor fellow who does not know how to act with people, but he will not have the disposition to return for more uncouthness.

Undue familiarity more frequently results from (1) calling the

reader by name too frequently or writing in too informal language to a stranger and (2) making references to subjects which are entirely too personal for business discussions. For an obvious purpose, the writer pretends a closeness of friendship or an overweening interest which does not exist. It is characteristic of the shyster. Like other forms of pretense, it is resented. In the following letter giving information on home insulation to a college professor, the jocularity doesn't just fall flat; it boomerangs!

Just set the thermostat and relax. That's all you have to do, Professor Eckberg. Pick up your book and settle down in a cozy chair. The Mrs. won't be continually warning you to get your old sweater, or nagging you to shovel more coal on the fire, or to put another blanket on the cherubs.

Yes, Professor Eckberg, ISOTEMP will guard over your household. Take a gander at the statistical table in the folder, *Modern Insulation for Older Homes*. This Table shows that out of every 8,000,000 cases of respiratory diseases, 6,536,042 occurred in uninsulated homes—over 75 % from the very type of home you're now living in!

Didn't you say that you spent over \$300 for coal last year, Professor Eckberg? That's a lot of money out of a professor's salary; and as you said, "Even then the place wasn't always warm."

If you will fill in and return the enclosed card, we will send Mr. Don Diller, our Milwaukee representative, to answer any of your questions. Incidentally, Professor Eckberg, Mr. Diller is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin with a degree in heating engineering. He may be the guy who slept through half your classes six years ago; but somewhere he learned how to make your home more comfortable and reduce those high coal bills. Then the Mrs. can buy that fur coat she's been nagging you about for when she goes outside, where it is cold!

Such diction as *cherubs*, *gander*, and *nagging* might be used in breezy conversation with an old friend and perhaps in a letter to the old friend but certainly not in a letter to someone the writer does not know. Using the reader's name four times in such short space gives the impression of fawning. And the assumptions and references to family relations and activities are typical of familiarity that breeds contempt. These spring from insincerity; but they are discourteous in the truest sense and thus destructive of good will.

## Service Attitude

In addition to a desirable tone as a means of maintaining good will, good letter writers show their readers that the company's interest extends beyond making a profit. A business organization obviously

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must make profits if it is to exist; both reader and writer accept that premise. To deny it is trying to fly under false colors. The answer is neither to deny nor to affirm: just don't talk about it! Instead, let your letters remind present and potential customers of your thoughtfulness and genuine desire to be of service, through

1. Resale material on the goods and/or the house,
2. Sales-promotional material on other goods (in some letters),
3. Special-occasion letters.

**Resale Material.** Often a writer needs to assure a reader of the wisdom of his choice of goods or of the house he has chosen to do business with and thus stress satisfaction. In *keeping the goods sold*, resale material fosters repeat orders and forestalls complaints. It is an effective device in meeting competition.

As the phrase is most frequently applied by correspondents to goods and services, "resale" means talk about something in which the reader has already shown an interest, either by inquiry or by actual order. Most buyers would feel better about the product upon reading the following resale idea woven into an acknowledgment letter:

The Henshaw electric boudoir clocks (8 @ \$12) that you ordered March 1 are our fastest-selling models in this price range. Because they are accurate as well as beautiful, they make excellent gifts.

The woman receiving the following would most likely feel much more secure in her choice of a suit—and thus happier with the suit as well as the company that sold it to her:

Your new suit is one of the Fashion-True line by Andreena. With its simple slenderizing skirt and tuxedo jacket (both Coleman 100% wool), it will give you equal pleasure and comfort at church, at a football game, or at an informal luncheon.

Such material is most effective when it is relatively short and when it is specific. Tell a reader buying a white shirt, for instance, that

It will launder rapidly and easily because the collars and cuffs are permanently starched.

*OR*

It will retain its comfortable shape because it's preshrunk and guaranteed to shrink no more than 1%.

*OR*

The buttons will stay on because they are double-lock-stitched.

*OR*

Made from long-staple California cotton, your Pallcraft shirt will give you the wear you expect from a shirt of this quality.

But don't try to tell your reader *all* these points in a resale passage. And for your own greatest effectiveness as a writer, don't try just to get by with a lame "Pallcraft shirts are a good buy."

Used most frequently in acknowledgments, resale material on the goods may also appear in certain credit, collection, and adjustment letters.

Resale material on the house consists of pointing out services sometimes called "the little extras" which the firm renders its customers. Especially in the beginning of a business relationship you want to tell your reader about services you render—sales assistance, advertising aids, and the like to dealers. Retail stores often talk of air conditioning, lounges, lunchrooms, and personal shoppers, to mention only a few.

The following excerpt from a letter to a dealer is typical:

Along with your shipment of Lane candies are some display cards and window stickers which you'll find valuable aids in bringing these delicious candies to the attention of your customers. Our advertising department will regularly furnish you with seasonal displays, and will be glad to help you on any special display problem in connection with the sale of Lane's.

And this—from a retail store to a new charge customer—is also a good sample of resale on the house:

You are welcome to use Rosen's air-conditioned lounging and rest rooms on the mezzanine, the fountain luncheonette on the first floor, or the spacious parking lot right behind the store. It is absolutely free to customers shopping at Rosen's, no matter if your purchase amounts to only a spool of thread.

Also from a retail department store to a new customer:

When you cannot come to the store, call or write Lola Lane, our personal shopper, who will gladly do your shopping for you. Most of the time she can have your merchandise on the delivery truck or in the mail the same day she receives your order.

Resale material on the house need not—indeed, should not—be confined solely to letters to new customers. Any time that a new service is added, an old one improved, or a line expanded is an appropriate occasion to tell customers about the firm's continued attempt to give satisfaction.

Resale passages are the writer's attempts to confirm or increase the faith of the reader in goods, services, or the firm he is already interested in. Sales-promotional material on new and different goods or services seeks to promote interest in something else the firm can supply.

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**Sales-promotional Material.** For a number of reasons, sales material about related products is desirable in some acknowledgment, credit, collection, and even adjustment letters. The most obvious business reason is that, regardless of what you try to market, you must constantly seek to sell more of it to more customers all the time. In letters, however, the most significant reason is the concrete demonstration that the firm desires to be of further service. A third function of sales-promotional material is that it can end a letter naturally and easily, with emphasis on further service. The following example illustrates the point:

Your carpenters' tools, as itemized on the enclosed invoice, were shipped this morning by parcel post; they should reach you by October 15. Thank you for your check, which covers all charges.

*Resale* The Crossman level, with aluminum frame, is stronger and weighs less than wooden ones; and it will not rust or warp. The true-tempered steel used in the Flex-Line tape is permanently oiled; so you can be sure it will easily and rapidly unwind and rewind every time you use it.

*Sales* When you receive the fall and winter catalogue we're sending separately, turn to page 126 and read the description of the Bradford 6½-inch electric hand saw. This is the lowest price at which it has ever been offered. To enjoy the savings in time and energy this time-saving piece of equipment offers, use the handy order blank at the back of the catalogue.

You'll need to observe a few precautions in the use of sales material. Above all, it should reflect the desire to be of service rather than the desire to sell more goods. It is low-pressure sales effort, comparable to the way a salesman, after selling a woman a pair of shoes, will casually pick up a matching or complementary purse and say, "Perhaps you'd like to examine this purse, which goes with your shoes so well." Only after the customer displays an interest in the suggested item does the salesman begin a real sales talk. If he makes another sale, that's good. But if he doesn't, it's still good: most customers are pleased because of the demonstrated interest in their welfare or happiness.

If, however, the insatiable sales appetite of "I want to sell you more" is established through selfish, greedy terminology, you neither promote sales nor please the customer. When emphasis is on *what we want* rather than *what you get*, the effect is unfavorable, maybe even repellent, as in the following:

More than 8,000 of these Multimowers have been sold through our factory!

And now that a large demand has been built up for our product, we want to sell it through dealers.

When emphasis is on *order* instead of *service*, Greedy Gus overtones are almost inevitable:

We also sell attractive summer purses, silk and nylon hosiery, and costume jewelry to complete your excellent line of goods. We are sending you our catalogue. And we hope to fill many more orders for you.

In terms of customer good will, this correspondent would have made a better impression had he rephrased the foregoing passage somewhat like this:

The summer purses and costume jewelry shown on pages 29 to 32 of the accompanying catalogue have also sold well for many of our other customers. We'll be glad to handle your order for these items on the same terms as this one. Use the handy order blank and reply envelope in the back of the catalogue.

Appropriateness is also a factor. When a woman buys a suit, a natural item to call to her attention is a blouse; a man buying a suit can be told about shirts, ties, hats, or shoes. But to tell a purchaser of heavy-duty truck tires about the good buy you now have in refrigerators or the buyer of a washing machine about your special on tires would be questionable most of the time because such suggestions appear to be dictated by the greedy desire to further sales rather than an eagerness to render service. Almost always sales material should be on items related to those under consideration.

Before using sales material, consider also the kind of letter you are writing and what it is supposed to do. A letter requiring further action on the reader's part needs final emphasis on that action, not on sales material. In acknowledgment letters, for example, you can use sales-material endings to good purpose when you are sending the goods as requested, but not when additional action by the customer is necessary. Also, while you might use sales material in an early collection letter to a good customer, it is decidedly inappropriate as soon as your letter reflects concern over the account. And in adjustments you may safely use sales material to end a letter making full reparation, because you can be fairly sure the customer is going to be pleased with the results; but its use in a compromise or a refusal is usually questionable.

Both resale and sales material help to sell more merchandise, but they are even more effective as good-will builders because they imply positively and emphatically the general statement, "We are eager to serve you."

**Special Good-will Letters.** Also to demonstrate continuing interest in the customer and the desire to serve, special good-will letters subtly use resale material on the goods and the house, and sales ma-

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terial. They have often been called the "letters you don't have to write—but should." Since the customer does not expect them, since they usually bring something pleasant, and since your reader knows you do not have to write them, they are doubly welcome and thus greater builders of good will than some other types. Because they are of great variety in function and occasion and because you can write them with greater understanding and skill after studying other kinds of letters, they are treated in greater detail in Chapter VI.

*[All the problems for the first four chapters are at the end of Part Two because we think you should cover all four basic tests of a good business letter before trying to write any kind of letter. We urge you to read the first four chapters quickly but thoroughly so that you can put all the basic principles to use even in your first letter.]*

## IV. Persuasion: What the Reader Does

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### **1. Planned Presentation**

Good News or Neutral Messages

Disappointing Messages

Persuasive Messages

### **2. You-Viewpoint**

### **3. Adaptation**

Adapting Talking Points

Adapting Language and Style

Referring to Common Experiences

Personalizing

### **4. Positive Statement**

### **5. Success Consciousness**

BECAUSE IN most business letters you are trying to produce an action or a reaction which may lead presently to an action, many correspondents maintain that every letter is a sales letter. In the broad sense that you are usually trying to persuade someone that your suggestion is a good one and/or that yours is a good firm to deal with, that's right.

If you are going to be successful in that mission, you'll want to make conscious use of five principles of persuasion which have proved helpful in getting the desired positive response: (1) planned presentation in the light of your objective, (2) you-viewpoint interpretation, (3) adaptation—even personalization when possible, (4) positive statement, and (5) success consciousness.

### **Planned Presentation**

You can make your job of beginning fairly simple and also gain favor with your reader if you will classify your letter according to one of three probable reactions of your reader:

- A. Does it contain information which will please the reader?  
Does it take action that the reader has requested? Does it request action which the reader is prepared to take?

- B. Does it contain bad news?
- C. Or does it request action which the reader is probably not already willing to take?

According to subject matter, you can list hundreds of different kinds of business letters; but for predetermining its beginning and the subsequent development of points, all you need to decide upon is whether your letter contains good news or neutral information (A-plan), disappointing information (B-plan), or persuasion leading to action (C-plan).

**Good News or Neutral Messages.** Most A-plan letters say or imply "Yes," as in favorable replies to requests, acknowledgments in which you can ship goods as ordered, adjustments fully complying with the customer's request, and credit approvals. Since you are doing what the reader wants you to do, the first sentence should contain the big idea of the letter; that is what the reader most wants to know. Then you follow up with necessary details in an order of relative importance or natural sequence. Frequently letters of this kind end with a short punch line recalling the benefits of the good news in the beginning, as suggested by Figure 1.

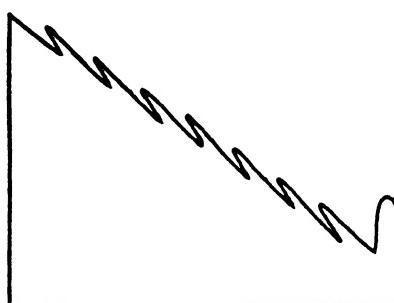


FIGURE 1. "Good news" and "routine" letters.

Letters which merely seek or merely transmit business information follow the same basic order: inquiries and replies about personnel applicants and explanations or identifications of something about the company, its personnel, even its products. All these are situations in which your reader is neutral (neither displeased nor pleased), and so the letters are taken for granted. They should be characterized by the same directness and dispatch in their handling as in the following "Yes" letter:

Your new Admiral desk clock was mailed by insured parcel post this morning and should be at your door no later than January 23.

The same kind of heavy padding carefully protecting your new Admiral in the large corrugated box will be used for all future

shipments of fragile articles so that they will arrive in the same perfect condition in which they leave the store.

And now will you take a moment to assist us in recovering from the Post Office by signing the enclosed notification forms and returning them to us with the original clock?

The recipient of the new Admiral on January 26 will no doubt be pleased with its beauty and practicality. It is an appropriate birthday surprise.

***Disappointing Messages.*** B-plan letters, those that say "No" or "Yes, but . . ." (that is, modified refusals), have no such quality of directness. If you have to tell a reader that you can't give him the booklet he wants, that you can't fill his order as he has specified, that you can't extend credit to him, or that you cannot make the adjustment as he has requested, you have a situation which is potentially good-will-killing—especially if you blurt out the disappointing information immediately.

We assume throughout this book that you are a fair-minded person who does not act highhandedly or arbitrarily and that you therefore have good reasons when you refuse anything. We know, too, that in most cases you can show that some of your reasons are beneficial to the other person—as when a mother refuses her child something for the child's good as well as (sometimes even *rather than*) her own. The following psychology of refusing, therefore, depends on your having good reasons, as does any satisfactory refusal.

You know that when you refuse anybody anything to which he thinks he's entitled, he becomes frustrated unless he receives justifying reasons (not just excuses or no explanation at all). You know further that if you begin with the refusal, you will at least disappoint your reader and you may anger him. You also know that an angry person is not a logical one. So, even if you do give good reasons *after* the refusal, they fall on an illogical mind, where they do not take effect. But if you start pleasantly and give justifying reasons *before* a refusal, your reader is much more likely to accept your refusal without irritation because you lead him to see the justice of it. Thus your logical reasons fall on a logical mind; and the reasons which caused you to feel justified in refusing convince your reader that you *are* justified. That psychology directs you to a rather specific plan for all refusals.

To soften the effect, you try to catch the reader's favorable interest in the opening remarks with something from the situation on which both reader and writer can agree. This is commonly called a "buffer." Writers use it for two reasons: (1) to suggest that the writer is a reasonable person who can see two sides of the question and (2)

to set the stage for a review of the facts in the case. A good buffer will therefore be

- pleasant, usually agreeing with something the reader has said;
- relevant, thus quickly showing the subject of the letter;
- equivocal, avoiding any implication that the answer is yes or no; and
- carefully worded for a natural transition to the explanation.

After you establish compatibility, you analyze the circumstances sympathetically and understandingly, giving the reasons why you can't do what he wants you to do. Not until you have tactfully prepared the way with these justifying reasons do you want to reveal the disappointing news. You further attempt to soften the blow by embedding this information, by giving it minimum space, and by positive statement. You may be able to make the refusal clear by implication. Certainly you do not want to stress it.



FIGURE 2. "Bad news" letters.

Nor do you want to end your letter on a note of disappointment; to close, select some point of favorable interest to your reader which demonstrates your desire to retain him as a friend and customer. Graphically, your procedure looks like the line in Figure 2. The following positive refusal illustrates the strategy:

Your comments, Professor McGinnis, on the effectiveness of the "More Business" series are helpful to those of us at Read's who worked on these practical guides for users of direct mail.

When we first planned the booklets for our customers, we had in mind a check list for a business using direct mail extensively rather than a thoroughgoing treatment suitable for a textbook. Accordingly, our quota for noncommercial users was set at a low figure—partly because we did not anticipate many requests and partly because of present-day paper restrictions.

Since the series has proved so popular with our customers and since fine paper like Read's is increasingly hard to get, we have for over a month been distributing copies only to commercial users, though we are glad to make available what we can to training institutions.

Perhaps you may be able to use the extra copy—sent to you this morning by parcel post—as a circulating library for your correspondence students. Two or three days' use should be ample for most of them, and they're perfectly welcome to copy anything they care to.

Will you give us the benefit of your suggestions for making the series more extensive after you have had an opportunity to test its teachability more thoroughly?

**Persuasive Messages.** The third basic letter situation, the C-plan, if graphed, shows two areas of interest, as in Figure 3. You start off with something that you can be reasonably sure your reader wants or is interested in, thus catching his attentive interest from the start. Develop your letter in concrete pictures of what will benefit him. If you can start off with his agreeing with you and maintain this agreement as you try to convince him of the worth of your proposition, you can wind up with his agreeing that he wants to do what you want him to do.

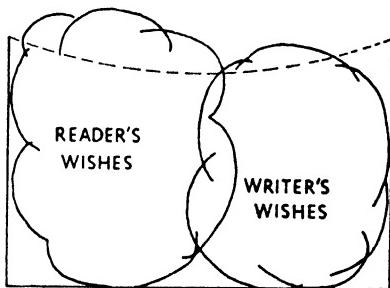


FIGURE 3. "Selling" letters.

Starting a letter of this kind need not be difficult if you will make your most honest and concrete attempt to figure out what it is the reader wants (or needs) that you can give him. When you have developed the benefits he will derive from complying with your suggestion and have supplied enough evidence for him to believe that your claims are true, then you are in a psychological position to ask him to do what you want him to do.

Prospecting (cold-turkey) sales and application letters, persuasive requests, and some collections follow this pattern, as in the following persuasive request for a confidential manual:

How often have you received—from well-educated people—letters that are not worth your attention?

You as a Public Relations Director and employer are of course interested in this problem. And I as a teacher of business correspondence am too. Here at Harwood we're turning out a thousand students each year who are better trained in writing effective letters

than the usual college graduate. But we'd like to do more. We'd like to be sure that we're giving them what business wants.

It's quite likely, you know, that some of these students may some day be writing letters for your company. Wouldn't they be better prepared if we instructors could stress the ideas that you have given special emphasis to in your recent correspondence manual? Both the students and business firms would benefit from your letting us have a copy for our teaching files. Of course we'd handle the material with whatever confidence you specify. And I assure you we'd be most grateful for this practical teaching aid.

But the ones especially benefiting from your sending a copy would be the students and business firms like Southern Atlantic.

Will you send us a copy today?

The planned steps in all selling are here. Whether you want to call them four steps (Attention, Interest, Conviction, Action, or Promise, Picture, Prove, Push) or three steps (Attentive Interest, Conviction or Evidence, and Action) or more doesn't matter. But it does matter that you get attentive interest quickly by promising a reader benefit, give evidence backing up that promised benefit, and confidently ask the reader to do what you have already decided you want him to do.

Keep in mind what one highly successful direct-mail specialist told his understudies: "Remember, the Three Wise Men came bearing gifts—not seeking them."

That's a good thing to remember in writing "Yes" letters, highly desirable for writing successful "No" letters, and absolutely essential in writing persuasive letters.

### You-Viewpoint

The you-viewpoint or you-attitude does not hinge on actual gift giving, of course. What the direct-mail specialist was referring to is a state of mind: always ferreting out and emphasizing the benefits to the reader resulting from your suggestion or decision and subordinating or eliminating (but not denying) your own.

Of course, it isn't pure unselfishness. All businesses must be motivated by the profit motive. When you try to sell something, obviously you are trying to make some money; but you don't need to put that idea into words. When you attempt to collect, obviously you want—maybe even need—the money; you don't need to put that idea into words. When you apply for a job, obviously you either want or need work to earn some money; you don't need to put that idea into words. Both reader and writer *assume* all these ideas. Putting them into words merely sounds selfish, wastes words, and helps your cause not one bit.

Nor is the you-attitude a question merely of politeness, courtesy, or good manners. The hard business reason for you-viewpoint presentation is that when you show you are aware of and are doing something about your reader's needs or problems, he will react more favorably to your suggestion. In other words, he will do what you want him to if—and only if—you show him that he gets something worth the cost and trouble.

Nothing else is so important to your reader as himself (and when he's writing to you so that you're the reader, he'll take the same stand if he's smart). So by central theme and wording you show that you are thinking of him and his welfare as you write.

The you-viewpoint requires imagination, certainly. The old story of the village half-wit's answer to how he found the mule ("Why, I just thought, If I was a mule, where would I go?") is apt. The ability to visualize the reader's desires, circumstances, and probable reactions and write in those terms is the answer. When you write to secretaries, you *are* a secretary; when you write to doctors, you *are* a doctor; when you write to merchants, you *are* a merchant. It requires that you be able to play many roles. Without that basic outlook and attitude, you-viewpoint presentation may be superficial.

Phrasing helps, it is true. You are more likely to write in terms of the reader if you use more *you*'s and *your*'s than the first-person pronouns *I, me, mine, we, us, our*. But if you apply that test, the sentence, "We want your check" has more you-viewpoint than "We want our check," when obviously neither has any. "Please send your check" is neutral. The reader-dominated sentence might well read, "To keep your account in the preferred-customer class, send your check for \$142.63 today," or "Get your account in shape for the heavy Christmas buying coming up by sending your check for \$142.63 today." Whether you say "sending *us* your check" or not is immaterial, except that it wastes a word; the *us* is clearly understood. But what is much more significant, the reader-benefit reason—the you-viewpoint—is there.

The following examples may help to clarify the point for you:

**WE-VIEWPOINT:**

We are shipping your order of June 2 this afternoon.

We have spent 27 years making the Jurgin the finest of its kind.

**YOU-VIEWPOINT:**

You should receive the Jurgin crosscut saw you ordered June 2 no later than Saturday, June 7.

Back of your Jurgin blade is 27 years of successful testing and remodeling. Because it is taper-ground alloy steel, it is less likely to bind on you than other models.

Making your reader the subject or object of your sentences will help you keep you-viewpoint interpretation. The only way to get it in the first place, however, is to subordinate your own reactions to those you estimate are your reader's probable reactions and then to write in a manner which clearly shows that your reader's interests dominate. An example of well-intentioned writing that is fundamentally writer-dominated is the conventional thank-you beginning: "Thank you for your order of June 2 for one Jurgin crosscut saw blade" and "We are grateful for. . . ." Even worse is the selfish "We are glad to have your order for. . . ." All three variations have this strike against them: they emphasize the personal reaction of the writer rather than something the reader is interested in knowing.

If you can (or will) make shipment, an opening like the following has more you-viewpoint than any of the three foregoing:

Your Jurgin crosscut saw blade should arrive by prepaid railway express no later than Saturday, June 7.

This is something your reader wants to know! If you can't make shipment, then a resale comment is a better example of you-viewpoint than the selfish statement of pleasure upon the receipt of another order or the disappointing statement that the reader is not now getting what he wants. If shipment will be delayed only a few days, this is a possibility for retaining positiveness and you-viewpoint:

The Jurgin crosscut saw blade you ordered will give you long and faithful service.

When the reader has done you a favor, some form of "thank you" may be one of the best beginnings you could use. In place of the conventional "Dear Mr. Miller," the salutation—

Thank you, Mr. Miller!

—has a directness and enthusiasm which are heart-warming. The first paragraph may then concentrate on a more significant point:

Those articles about palletization which you suggested contain some of the best information I've been able to uncover.

But doesn't the statement of the significance you attach to your reader's contribution adequately establish your appreciation?

We do not mean to imply that an expression of gratitude is out of place. No one ever offended a reader with a genuine, appropriate "thank you." But we do want to stress to you that you can accomplish the same function with some statement which will place more emphasis on your reader—where it should be!

The preceding remarks concerning planned presentation and you-viewpoint apply whether you're writing a special or a form letter—

a sales, credit, collection, application, or simple reply. The closer you can come to making your reader nod his head in agreement and think "That's what I want to hear," the greater your possibilities for favorable reception of your letter.

## Adaptation

When you can make him also think "That sure fits me," you have an additional advantage. Successful adaptation makes your reader feel that your letter has been written with him specifically in mind.

Even in a mailing to a large number of people, you will have identifiable common characteristics (of geography, age, educational level, vocation, or income status, for example) that will enable you to adapt the talking points, language, and style of your letter and to make references to commonplace circumstances and events.

***Adapting Talking Points.*** In adapting talking points (or theme) you simply seek out and emphasize those reasons that you believe will be most influential in causing your reader to act or react as you want him to. Specifically, you would try to sell a typewriter to a secretary on the basis of ease of operation, to an office manager on ease of maintenance and durability, but to a purchasing agent on the basis of long-range cost. The lawnmower which you would sell to a homeowner because of its ease of handling and maintenance, you would sell to a hardware dealer because of its salability and his profit margin. A car is more likely to appeal to a man on the basis of economy and dependability of operation; to a woman the appeals of appearance and comfort are stronger. When a man buys a shirt, he is more interested in appearance and fit; his wife is more interested in launderability and long wear.

Accordingly, you adapt your talking points to your reader(s) for increased persuasiveness. This is a fairly simple procedure when you are writing a single letter and is entirely possible in a mass mailing if you study the characteristics common to all people on your mailing list.

***Adapting Language and Style.*** You adapt language and style, in general, in the light of your reader's age, educational level, and vocation (which influence his social and economic position). As your reader's years, professional and social prestige, and financial status increase, you are safer in using longer sentences, uncommon words, and more formal language. Sometimes you will want to use the specialized terms of vocational classes, such as doctors, lawyers, and insurance men, for instance. Though some of these terms are more technical than you would use in writing to a general audience, to the specialized reader they convey the impression that you, the writer, understand his problems. The application of this suggestion means that when you write to doctors, references to patients, labora-

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tories, diagnoses, and the like help; to an insurance man, prospects, premiums, and expirations are likely referents.

But for all kinds of readers, you won't go wrong if you write in the simple, informal, conversational business style discussed in Chapter II.

**Referring to Common Experiences.** Better adaptation than language and style, however, are references to common experiences in the reader's life. A reference to vocation, to a geographical factor, to some home and family status—in fact, to any activity or reaction which you can be reasonably sure your reader has experienced—rings the bell of recognition and makes the reader feel that very definitely you are writing to and about him.

In a letter to college students, for instance, the following reference would almost universally bring positive (and in most cases humorous) recognition:

When your teacher talks on . . . and on . . . and on . . . (even when it's two minutes past the bell!).

To parents:

When your child yawns, turns over, and FINALLY goes to sleep.

To doctors:

. . . for the elimination of dust, smoke, and antiseptic odors from your reception room.

To school superintendents:

. . . to reduce the necessary and healthy noise of active adolescents when they're changing classes.

To almost any businessman:

. . . when your files simply won't reveal an important carbon.

To anyone who is or has been a secretary:

An hour's transcription to get in the night's mail—and at 5 minutes to 5!

Any of the preceding phrases could go into a form letter or an individual letter. The more specifically you can phrase these references to make them pinpoint to your one reader, the more effective your adaptation will be.

**Personalizing.** To further the impression that the letter has been prepared for the reader alone and to heighten the feeling of friendliness, correspondents sometimes use the reader's name, not only in the inside address and the salutation but also in the letter copy. About the middle of the letter, much as one uses a friend's name in talking with him, or near the end of the letter in the same way you frequently use a person's name in ending a conversation, such refer-

ences as the following help to give the impression that the letter is for one person rather than a group:

You'll also appreciate the lightness of the Multimower, Mr. Bowen.

Your Atlanta Luminall representative, Mr. Paul Owen, will be glad to call on you and answer any other questions you may have, Mr. Bowen.

Just check a convenient time on the enclosed card and drop it in the mail today.

In individually typed letters the placement of the name presents no problem; in form letters, space is usually left at the end of a line (as in the preceding examples) so that typing in the reader's name is easy, regardless of length. Unless you can match type and print perfectly, however, you may do more harm than good. In any case, use of the reader's name is a more or less mechanical process; it is probably the least effective means of adapting.

You can also increase the feeling of friendliness by the wording of your salutation and complimentary close. *Dear Sir* and *Very truly yours*, though appropriate many times, are somewhat formal and do not reflect the warmth of *Dear Mr. Bowen* and *Sincerely yours* or some other less formal phrasing. The main forms and their order of formality are discussed in detail on page 48.

Of far greater significance are adaptation of talking points and life-like references to the reader's activities. The following letter answers the lady's questions in salesmanlike presentation and enhances the persuasiveness of the message with special references that could apply to no one but the reader:

DEAR MRS. JACKSON:

The Stair-Traveller you saw in the June *Home and Yard* will certainly make daily living easier for you and your faithful old servant. You can make as many trips upstairs and downstairs as you care to *every day* and still follow your doctor's advice.

Simply sit down on the bench (it's about the same size as a dressing-table stool), hold the arm support with one hand, and press the button with the other. Gently and smoothly, your Stair-Traveller takes you upstairs at a rate just a little faster than ordinary walking. Should the electricity fail in Greenbriar while you're using your Stair-Traveller, automatic brakes bring it to a gentle stop and hold it in place until the current comes on again. Then you just press the button to start it again.

Folded back against the wall when not in use, the Stair-Traveller's simple, straight lines of mahogany will blend in well with your antiques. Your Stair-Traveller will be right at home on your front straight stairway, Mrs. Jackson; it will be more convenient for you there; and, as it is designed only for straight stairways, the installa-

tion is simple and economical. Notice the folded Stair-Traveller on page 3 of the booklet I'm sending you with this letter; it looks somewhat like a console table, doesn't it?

To explain to you how simply and economically your Stair-Traveller can be installed, Mr. J. B. Nickle, our Memphis representative, will be glad to call at a time convenient for you. Will you use the enclosed postcard, which is already addressed and partially filled out, to let him know when that will be?

Such specialized references do increase letter costs when they mean writing a personal letter rather than using a form. But many times a personal letter must be used if the letter is to get the job done. Even in form paragraphs and entire form letters, however, some means of adaptation to the reader's situation can be made.

You can find out a great deal about your reader through his letters to you, your credit records (including credit reports), salesmen's reports, and the like. Even a bought or rented mailing list contains the names of people with some common characteristics of vocation, location, age, sex, finances, and buying and living habits. You won't make your letter do all it could do if you don't use your knowledge of these common characteristics to adapt your letter according to talking points and endow it with the marginal pulling power of known references to familiar events, activities, places, or persons.

A word of caution should be sounded here, however: Don't try to be specific beyond the point of likelihood. For example, you may have a mailing list of parents, but you don't know how many children these people have or what the sex is. A reference to "your child" is safe (even if the reader has more than one); a reference to "your children" is not—and certainly not to "your boy" or "your girl." It should be obvious that one could not safely use such tags as "Junior" and "Sister" and certainly not individual names like "Bobby" and "Janie." Only when you *know* that your reader does have a Bobby and a Janie can you afford to be so specific in adaptation.

### **Positive Statement**

Your letters have greater prospects for success if you focus on positive ideas because people—most of them, at any rate—respond more favorably to a positive prospect than to a negative one.

Saying the cheerful, positive thing that people do want to hear rather than the unpleasant or unhappy, negative thing that they do not want to hear is really just an extension of you-viewpoint presentation and tact. It requires, first of all, staying optimistic yourself so that you can see the rosier side of any picture. It comes from constantly superimposing a positive picture on a negative one, thus completely eliminating, or at least subordinating, the negative idea.

Translated into letter-writing procedures, it is the result of stressing what something is rather than what it is not, emphasizing what the firm or product can and will do rather than what it cannot, leading with action rather than apology or explanation, and avoiding words that convey basically unpleasant ideas.

Test after test of both advertising copy and letter copy has demonstrated the wisdom of positive statement. That is why nearly forty years ago successful copy writers warned against the denied negative (and today's writers still issue the same warning). That is why the effective writer will write the following positive statements rather than their negative counterparts:

**NEGATIVE**

Penquot sheets are not the skimpy, loosely woven sheets ordinarily in this price class.

**POSITIVE**

Penquot sheets are woven 186 threads to the square inch for durability and, even after 3-inch hems, measure a generous 72 × 108 inches.

We are sorry that we cannot furnish the club chairs by August 16.

After checking with the production department, we can definitely assure you your club chairs by August 29.

We cannot ship in lots of less than 12.

To keep down packaging costs and to help customers save on shipping costs, we ship in lots of 12 or more.

I have no experience other than clerking in my father's grocery store.

Clerking in my father's grocery store for three summers taught me the value of serving people courteously and promptly.

If we can help, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Please call upon us when we can help.

A special form of negativism is the challenging question which invites a negative answer. Although it is devoid of negative wording, the question, "Wouldn't you rather drink Old Judge?" is more likely to bring forth the reply, "No, I'd rather drink Colonel Dalton" or maybe "Make mine Dipsi-Cola!" than it is to get a "Yes" answer. "Who wouldn't want a Kreisler Regal?" will bring something like a bristling "Not me, brother, I want a Cabriolet!" from most readers, who will resent the presumptuousness of such a question. "What could be finer than an XYZ dishwasher?" will elicit, among other answers, "A full-time maid!" Such questions, along with the apparently harmless "Why not try a Blank product?" get your reader out of step with you and, because they invite a negative response, are thus a deterrent to the success of your suggestion.

Keeping your messages positive also means deliberately excluding negative words. You can't be "sorry" about something without recalling the initial unhappy experience. You can't write "unfortunately" without restating some gloomy aspect of a situation. Nor can you write in terms of "delay," "broken," "damages," "unable to," "cannot," "inconvenience," "difficulty," "disappointment," and others of negative character without stressing some element of the situation which makes your reader react against you rather than with you.

For all these reasons the effective writer will write "ABC Dog Biscuit will help keep your dog healthy" instead of "ABC Dog Biscuit will help keep your dog from getting sick." It's just a question of accentuating the positive.

### Success Consciousness

Success consciousness is the confident assumption that your reader will do what you ask him to do or accept the decision your letter announces. To reflect that attitude in your letters, guard against any phrasing which suggests that the reader may not share your enthusiasm and may not take the action you want him to.

Success consciousness is based on your own conviction that your explanation is adequate, your suggestion legitimate and valuable to your reader, your decision the result of adequate evidence and logical, businesslike reasoning. Thus assured yourself, you are not likely to write something which suggests or even implies that you are not sure of your ground. The sales correspondent who writes

*If you'd like* to take advantage of this time-saving piece of equipment, put your check and completed order blank in the enclosed envelope and drop it in the mail today.

would be better off if he did not remind the reader of his option to reject the proposal. Simply omitting the phrase "If you'd like" establishes a tone of greater confidence. The one word *if* is the most frequent destroyer of success consciousness.

Likewise, when tempted to write

*Why not* try a sample order?

the correspondent should remember that the suggestion is stronger with the elimination of "why not." It has not only the disadvantage of suggesting that the writer is not sure of his own case but also the distinct disadvantage of inviting the reader to think of several reasons why he should not do what the letter suggests. When he puts his mind to it, he can probably come up with several reasons.

*Hope* and its synonym *trust* are second only to *if* as destroyers of

success consciousness. In a letter granting an adjustment, the sentence

We hope you'll approve of our decision.

has greater success consciousness (and thus more reader response) when revised to read thus:

With this extension of your subscription to *Vacation* you can continue to read each month about the world's most interesting places.

By assumption (implication)—by definitely omitting the doubtful-sounding expression—the writer seems to say, “Of course, you and I realize that this is what you want.”

In refusals the following sentence sometimes appears in an otherwise well-written letter:

We trust you will understand our position.

Usually, however, it appears in a poorly written letter. And it is most frequently the result of inadequate explanation. The writer seems to despair of giving an adequate explanation and to hope that the reader will figure out one for himself. If you find yourself writing or wanting to write such a sentence, go back and see whether your explanation is ample. If it is, omit such a sentence; if it is not, revise your explanation so that it is convincing—and substitute some positive, confident statement for the weak-kneed expression.

Even in simple replies the problem arises with such a sentence as

We hope this is the information you wanted.

The implications of doubt can be removed quickly and easily with

We're glad to send you this information.

This principle of success consciousness applies in all types of letters, but it is most significant in selling letters.

A word of caution against high-pressure presumptuousness should be injected here, however. It is one thing to omit a reference to a reader's alternative; it is quite another thing to imply that the reader has no alternative! The application-letter writer who so boldly and confidently asks

*When may I come in to see you?*

gives the impression that he thinks his reader has no alternative but to see him. With such presumptuousness, he may irritate his reader. Rephrased like the following, his request for an interview would strike most readers favorably:

Will you write me a convenient time when I may come in and tell you more about why I believe I am the aggressive salesman you're looking for?

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Sales writers, too, may well consider the advantages of substituting the service-attitude type of action ending for the bromidic, high-pressure, unrestrained endings like "Don't delay!" and "Act today!"

Remember that most readers respect and are more likely to be influenced by the man who is confident, but are likely to be irritated by the man who appears to be pushing and ordering them around.

### Summary

Even such a minor point as folding and inserting a letter is symbolic of the basic theme in Part Two of this book:

1. Using the physical letter merely as a vehicle to carry the message in the least distracting and the most simple, time-saving way
2. Using language that does not distract from the message but conveys it as clearly, quickly, easily, and interestingly as possible
3. Establishing friendliness and confidence between writer and reader by showing a sincere desire to serve and an acceptable balance of personalities based on respect and consideration for the reader as well as for yourself
4. Persuading the reader by showing him that your proposals are to his individual benefit.

Fundamentally, the underlying theme in all the sections is consideration for the other fellow.

## LETTER CASES FOR PART TWO

*[The cases in this book are disguised and sometimes slightly modified real situations. Mostly they are from among the more difficult letter-writing situations of business.]*

*We have tried to give you the basic information needed without complicating details. You are expected to fill in details from your own imagination. But you are not to go contrary to the statements or implications in the problems, and your imaginary details must be reasonably likely.*

*The writing in the problems is intentionally not good, because you would learn nothing from copying our phrasing. So beware of copying sentences and clauses in your letters. Put your ideas in your own words.]*

1. Set up the following letter material in acceptable format as directed by your instructor:
  - a) *Letterhead: Mendota Department Store, University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin. Inside address: Mrs. Otto Von Willhelm, 2508 Prospect Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Signature block: Sincerely yours, Donald L. Woolbright, Adjustment Manager. Body: We always try to do our best to assure our*

customers satisfactory service and you are no exception. You are right, Mrs. Willhelm, in thinking that our merchandise should last for more than a month. We are continually testing our fabrics to determine the strongest weave possible. The seam in the left sleeve of the sweater should have been joined more carefully, and if it is not mended it is likely to be torn even more. A tear like the one in the elbow of the sweater came from a tear on a sharp object. We have yarn that matches your boy's sweater, and one of our expert alterations women in the service department is mending the elbows and rejoining the seam at no cost to you. The sweater will be returned in two or three days, and you will have to look very closely to distinguish it from a new one. Mrs. Willhelm, with summer rapidly approaching, I am sure that you and your family will be enjoying many outdoor activities. Next time you are in town, come in and let us show you our attractive variety of the latest summer fashions.

- b) *Letterhead:* Sipes Brothers, 907 Wales Street, Chicago 9, Illinois. *Inside address:* Wayne Feed Company, 1908 Lake Street, Madison, Wisconsin. *Signature block:* Cordially yours, David Greer, Credit Manager. Use a spring date. *Body:* The garden equipment that you ordered will be shipped today, express charges collect, and should be in your store in two days. With the planting and gardening season rapidly drawing near, I am sure that your sprayers and spreader carts will be in great demand. The \$132 itemized on the enclosed invoice has been debited to your newly opened account. You have earned this credit because of your willingness to pay and the rapidly increasing volume of business you are developing. Probably you will want to take advantage of our regular terms of 3/10, n/60. The 3% discount that you will receive by paying within 10 days after the date of your invoice (\$3.96 on this one order—enough to pay your cost on one sprayer) will soon add up to a tidy sum which you may use to purchase other merchandise. Otherwise, payment of the net amount within 60 days will keep you in the preferred-customer class. You may purchase as much as \$500 worth of merchandise in any one 60-day period. New merchandise is no more than a few hours away from you because of the good transportation between Chicago and Madison. This gives you the advantage of keeping your inventory down to a minimum. Your Sipes representative, Harry Hutt, will be glad to offer any advice and assistance to you that he can. He will be bringing attractive display cards and other merchandising aids as he calls on you. Should you need any Sipes gardening equipment between his visits, a letter or a phone call will have your stock on the way to you within 24 hours after we hear from you.

- c) *Letterhead:* Bell Pre-Fabricate, Bellville, Illinois. *Inside address:* John L. Roberts, Manley Brick Company, St. Louis, Missouri. *Signature block:* Sincerely yours, Donald Z. Woolbright, President. *Subject:* Requested Confidential Information about Bill Bingham. *Body:* Bill Bingham has worked for me for a year and a half. He came here as an accountant and assistant business manager in 19\_\_\_\_\_. Since then he has advanced until he is now plant manager. Bill is a hard worker and very eager to succeed in everything he attempts. Sometimes Bill drives himself into a tense condition, but he always seems to thrive on the challenge his job offers him, and I'm sure that in a larger plant like Manley he will be confronted with enough challenge to satisfy him. Also Bill and his wife want to live in a larger city where they can enjoy all the cultural opportunities a city has to offer. Although at Pre-Fabricate Bill has no opportunity to sell, sales work probably wouldn't be hard for him because he does enjoy people, is impressive looking, and is persistent. All of our employees like Bill—even our truck drivers, for whom he has to plan very strict budgets. In many ways I'll hate to lose Bill, but I know that he wants larger horizons.
- d) *Letterhead:* Loomis Brothers, Chicago, Illinois. *Inside address:* Mr. T. N. Reed, #6 Green Hill Road, Springfield, Missouri. *Signature block:* Sincerely yours, Dwayne Winston, Adjustment Manager. Use the current date. *Body:* The enclosed check is proof of our "Money back if not entirely satisfied" guarantee on all goods—and especially on the economy pup tent (6 N 07733) that you ordered March 20. Thank you for writing us. Two weeks ago we sent out a tracer and found that your tent went to Springfield, Illinois, instead of to Springfield, Missouri. It was then redirected to Missouri. As you know, freight delivered express charges collect is returned to the sender if no one is present to pay the charges. Consequently, your tent found its way back to Chicago. Two weeks ago we also sent you a post card notification in response to your letter. It has not been returned to us; and perhaps it, too, was misdirected. Will you please reconfirm your address for both your and our convenience? Mr. Reed, camping weather has just begun and the tent you ordered (7 feet long, 5 feet wide, 3½ feet high) is ideal for camping. The tent is strongly built for many years of rough use. It is water repellent, and has a nylon screen front door with a tie-down flap, jointed wood center poles for front and rear, guy ropes, and a sewn-in floor. The price is only \$15.50, much less than the price in a sporting-goods store. So that your boys can be enjoying this tent soon, just initial and return this letter along with the enclosed check and we will rush

the tent to you. You could insure safe arrival of your tent by sending us the \$2.75 shipping charges. We have already paid all previous shipping charges and we are glad to absorb them. Just use the enclosed envelope. I am sure that the pup tent will be a treasure for your boys to display for many years.

2. Evaluate (this means giving detailed reasons) Letter A over B (or vice versa). Consider not only general style but also the more desirable plan.

*Letter A*

This week I was called into a meeting with our company sales manager and our design man. They discussed the design of the vent caps which you regularly supply us. While it was agreed that your vent cap performs well functionally, they feel that a new, modern design cap will enhance our end product and increase sales.

I am enclosing two sketches of vent cap designs made by our design man. Perhaps you can strike a few samples from a pilot mold, or by adapting one of the present molds. You may alter these designs to affect mold remodeling cost savings.

We are allowing you latitude in adapting these designs so that a minimum of re-tooling would be necessary. As these molds, we believe, have been amortized through the volume of business we have given you in the past, we are hoping that you will see fit to absorb a re-tooling cost. The fact that you are given latitude in product design to most economically suit your tools, and that an increase in orders to you may be expected because of the better design, we think we are making only a fair request. It is our hope and intention to retain you as a supplier for a long time.

*Letter B*

Would you be interested if we could give you a considerable increase in our orders for vent caps?

After many of our salesmen reported that reluctant buyers of our end product criticize the design of the vent cap, our sales manager got our design man and me together this week to see what could be done. We agreed that the cap you supply us performs well functionally but that a modern design somewhat as suggested in the two enclosed sketches would increase our sales and probably those of your other customers (and therefore yours).

You could adapt these designs a bit for minimum re-tooling costs; and we believe the increased sales to us alone would soon amortize your costs, as the volume of business we have given you in the past has amortized your old molds. We sin-

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cerely believe a new design will increase sales and profits for us and for you.

We expect to retain you as a supplier for a long time, at increased volume, if we can get a vent cap that will help instead of hurting our end-product sales.

Will you strike a few samples from a pilot mold and let us see one along with your reactions to the proposal before our present stock runs out about November 1?

3. The following paragraph was written as the last in an acknowledgment of an order. Rewrite it or explain how you would revise it—as your instructor directs.

To make your future ordering easier, I'm sending along a credit application form for you to fill out. Thank you very much for your order and you may be sure that future orders will receive our prompt attention.

4. The following postcard message was used by a large mail-order seller of superior monogrammed shirts. Many of the college-men audience who received it objected to it. Try to reason out why. Then rewrite to improve it.

Your order has been completed and shipment is being made by parcel post today.

It will expedite delivery if you will have the money on hand when the shipment is offered for delivery. Under postal regulations C.O.D. packages are held at the Post Office for only 15 days, so if the shipment is not offered for delivery promptly may we suggest that you make inquiry for it at your local Post Office.

We appreciate this fine order and hope to have the pleasure of serving you again.

*Bund and Manderson Company  
7621 Seventeenth Street  
Detroit 17, Michigan*

5. Fourteen months ago you employed the XX Moving Vans to move you from a rented house to your new home. The service was entirely satisfactory. Today you received the following letter. Rewrite it making every change that a really efficient firm and good letter writer would have made.

This letter is to express our thanks to you. We sincerely appreciate the fact that you called upon our company to serve you—and we want you to know it.

We also want to be certain that our service was exactly as you wished it—for we know our business can grow only through *satisfied* customers.

Will you take a moment to fill out the enclosed card and drop it in the mail? It may seem like a minor thing, but it's very important to us, and will be appreciated.

We are looking forward to the opportunity of serving you and your friends in the future.

6. Rewrite the following letter to improve it in all ways you can:

Dear Flexiglass Customer,

I want to express my personal regrets to you for the delay which has been incident to repairing and returning your rod to you.

As a matter of explanation to you—Grove Industries, which manufactured Flexiglass rods in former years, went bankrupt early this year, and thereafter, the manufacturing and sales of Flexiglass were handled by others in a rather hap-hazard manner until the middle of September. At that time, an entirely new company, Vacation Mfg., Inc., with no connection whatsoever with the past, was organized to take over the fishing rod assets previously owned and operated by Grove Industries and its successor. Also, this NEW sales company, Flexiglass Rods, Inc. was organized to distribute Flexiglass Rods through the same outlets as in the past.

We, in this new organization, have been struggling over the back-log of repair rods which we inherited and are just now getting caught up.

I do hope that you will understand our efforts to overcome the "sins" of others and we regret you were deprived the use of your rod, through no fault of ours.

Should you have any problems in the future, it will be our pleasure to help you in any way we can.

7. A week ago Dr. and Mrs. Wayne Beaver of Gainesville, Florida, were in your interior-decorating shop (Atrium, 764 May Street, Jacksonville 4) trying to replace some aging lamp shades. They brought along a sample. You have now received samples from the lamp manufacturers and have decided that the Beavers' was the Toyo; and so you have ordered the two shades in that material sent directly to the Beavers from the manufacturer.

The same day, you sent in the order for the Herman Miller MAX chair the Beavers wanted. It should arrive in about four weeks. Write the Beavers for Atrium.

8. Improve the following letter in any way you can, but particularly by removing the insincerity and exaggeration. Actually, the hotel about which the letter is written is an old hotel of little better than mediocre quality. Assume that it is addressed to Professor F. W. Weeks, Secretary of the American Business Writing Association (an associa-

tion of teachers and practitioners of business writing interested in improving the quality of letters and reports).

Our XXXX HOTEL has over the years built its fabulous international reputation on the best precepts of service—service from the time that a convention agreement is inked until the last delegate has departed after the most successful meeting in your group's history.

To implement the service for which our XXXX has become world famous, we now plan personal contact with our clientele and we are looking forward to having the opportunity to call on you in your office in the near future.

In the meantime, I would appreciate it if you would be kind enough to peruse the enclosed brochure outlining the new and vast facilities of this magnificent edifice, whereby, you may become acquainted with its outstanding features as it relates to your particular meeting.

Our XXXX is outstanding in every way—we have a wide selection of meeting rooms that can comfortably accommodate 10 to 1,000 at a meeting and banquet in excess of 750 in one room. All of our rooms are beautiful in decor and, of course, have the very latest in sound and lighting equipment, blackboards, easels, podiums, etc., are all part of our meeting room setup.

Dining is an adventure at the XXXX that is unequaled anywhere across the nation. And, of course, our Bamboo Room for your evenings pleasure, featuring outstanding musical entertainment.

I am fully cognizant that you are an extremely busy person. However, I would greatly appreciate it if you would be kind enough to take time out of your busy day to advise me of your future meeting plans, as I shall be awaiting with keen interest your favorable response.

Kindest regards.

9. Rewrite and type up in acceptable format. Improve in any way you can. You may assume that the kit referred to does a thorough job of identifying location, improvements (paving, curbing, for example), and price. *To Mr. J. E. Stamps, 1216 Passavant Drive, Dallas 28. From the real estate firm of Southern California Developers, 26126 Septimasimo Boulevard, Los Angeles 49.*

Your request for information about California land can best be answered by our DLC Land Kit #6 which is enclosed. You can buy  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres of good, flat land in Los Angeles County, for \$35 down, \$35 a month. You can also buy 5 acre parcels in adjacent Kern County, \$20 down, \$20 monthly. Land values grow as California freeways grow, as population grows.

We don't claim that you will find oil or gold. Just land. The

enclosed literature shows exactly how and where to buy Southern California land, by mail, without brokers.

Water is no longer a problem. Water lines and sewer lines have been connected to Los Angeles.

If we can be of any further service, please don't hesitate to write us.

10. Oscar Stuber, Route #2, Waterloo, Iowa, writes the National Steel Corporation, 525 William Penn Place, Pittsburgh 30, Pennsylvania, the following inquiry:

Would you please tell me the difference between Chrome Steel and Stainless Steel and please tell me the price of these steels?

Roger Jones, manager of sales, answers with the following letter:

We thank you for your letter of September 17, which has been referred to this office for reply. In answer to the first part of your question Chrome Steel, as such, does not reflect any specific type of steel to us, since it could be an Alloy or a Stainless Steel. However, for your information whenever Chromium is specified at over 10% this steel would then be called Stainless.

There are many Stainless Steels produced and each one reflects a different price. Therefore, if you would supply us with more information as to the amount of material needed and also the end use of this material, we would be happy to endeavor to make recommendations for you.

We thank you for your interest in our corporation and if we may be of further aid, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Rewrite the letter for Mr. Jones, omitting unnecessary words, improving tone, correcting where necessary, and setting up in acceptable letter format.

11. Rewrite the following letter for easier reading and improved tone. It is signed by the policy supervisor of the Franklin Mutual Life Insurance Company, Oklahoma City, and is addressed to Mr. Craig Duncan, District Manager, Omaha. An "assured" is the person who is insured or covered under the provisions of the policy.

We are enclosing a set of endorsements with this policy which requires the signature of the named assured. Please have these endorsements signed by the named assured, attach the original to the assured's copy of the policy, retain one copy for your file and return one copy to the Home Office for the Home Office file.

Note that if the named assured has not attained the age of 21 years old, it will be necessary that we also have the signature of the parent or guardian on these same endorsements.

We will expect these endorsements returned within 30 days. If we do not receive the same signed endorsements within this

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time, it will be necessary to send a notice of cancellation to the assured.

12. As a new employee in the Council for the Blind of your state, you have the job of improving the form letters used by the Council. Here are two of them:

a) Dear Dr.

It would be appreciated if you would furnish us with appointment date(s) and time for the client(s) of this agency as indicated by the enclosed purchase order(s). It would also be appreciated if you would set the appointment(s) at least three weeks in advance in order that we can be sure that the client(s) will be notified in plenty of time. Thank you for your cooperation.

b) Dear

We understand that you failed to keep your appointment for an \_\_\_\_\_ examination which was scheduled on \_\_\_\_\_, with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. Failure to keep an appointment for such examinations is always embarrassing for us, and it is an aggravation to the doctor as well. Please indicate on the enclosed postal card the reason your appointment was not kept, and whether or not you would keep another one if made. We cannot impress too strongly upon you the need to meet any future appointments, and cannot promise to make another one for you if this second appointment is not kept.

13. Clear up the following letter to Mrs. John Stone, 1918 Redstone Drive, Joplin, Missouri, from Bauer-Stix Furniture Store, St. Louis.

We are indeed sorry that we failed to send the casters for your bed with your furniture. We were happy to send it to you.

Thank you for your order and we shall be looking forward to serving you often.

Rewrite the letter for greater clarity and positiveness as well as effective use of resale on the modern black wrought-iron bed, night table, and chair which the store delivered to Mrs. Stone. The casters have been sent express charges prepaid, after having been omitted from the first shipment.

14. For the personnel manager, Horning Glass Corporation, Indianapolis, Indiana, rewrite the following wordy, unplanned, and ungrammatical letter to Mr. Burton Rogers, 2615 Stanton Avenue, Bloomington, Indiana.

It was very nice of you to spend a few minutes with me last Tuesday when we discussed the opportunities available if you considered associating yourself with our good concern. Among

the many thing we talked about it was mutually agreed it would be best for all concerned for you to visit our main office and one of our factories to get a better picture of our operation and organization. I also mentioned that I wanted to plan a trip for four or five of you men to visit us in Indianapolis making the trip over on Friday May 4th and returning to Bloomington on Sunday, May 6th. If I recall correctly you were agreeable to make such a trip.

This contemplated trip is now definitely planned and I would like very much for you to go along. I plan to meet you and four other men at the Indiana Union Building in Bloomington at 7:00 am Friday morning May 4th for breakfast, immediately after breakfast you can be off for Steuben. All of your expenses will be paid and I am sure you will not only enjoy the trip, but you will definitely see what a wonderful organization we have. One of the other men will be using his car, so even though you may have a car we are not planning for you to use it on this trip.

When you arrive in Steuben you will first report to our main office to meet some of the key personnell, so your attire and the clothes you will need for two evenings of entertainment is entirely to your discretion.

I have enclosed a self-addressed postcard so you can advise me by return mail, definitely, whether or not I can plan on your making this trip and if you will meet with the rest of us for breakfast at 7 am Friday May 4th.

15. From Encyclopedia Universe, Merchandise Mart, Chicago 11. To Mrs. Jessamon Hawe, 327 East 32nd Street, Austin, Texas. Eliminate the clichés and incorporate resale passages to enhance the goodwill effect.

Dear Mrs. Hawe:

In accordance with our policy, we are sending *Encyclopedia Universe*, to you at the educational discount rate, to the total of \$249.50. The bookcase should be along with the books sometime next week.

You were smart to order this 24-volume set while the offer was on. Do not hesitate to call on us if we can be of service to you again. Thanking you, we remain,

16. From: Sales Manager, Holgate Toys, Henley Square, Pittsburgh. To: Mrs. Esther Haines, Manager, Haines' Gift Shop, Cleveland, Tennessee. Rewrite for tact and positiveness and to stimulate sales of superior Holgate toys and games for children 1-12.

Dear Mrs. Haines:

In accordance with your conversation with our salesman, H. P. Sherer, we are mailing your Holgate toy catalog under separate cover. We did not realize that you had a large enough

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store or did a big enough volume to warrant our stocking your store with this special line. Since Lionel acquired Holgate and Playschool, there has been a lot of reorganizing and confusion. Please excuse our mistake. It won't happen again.

17. Correct the following letter for spelling, punctuation, and economy of phrasing. Set up in acceptable form as directed by your instructor. It is to go to Mr. Robert F. Wells, 1213 Aberdeen Road, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and is signed by the sales manager of Minutefold, Inc., 1426 West Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 16, Pennsylvania.

Dear Mr. Wells:

The woodmaster Minutefold door you wrote about comes in heights of nine feet and eight feet with tracts  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " by  $1\frac{1}{4}$ ". These doors come in a variety of colors as illustrated in the enclosed pamphlet. All doors are coated with conversion clear finish—the finest available today. These Minutefold doors are mar resistant, as shown in tests conducted by GOOD HOUSEKEEPING magazine. The eight foot doors cost \$163 while the nine foot doors cost \$204. Since your ceiling is nine feet high, you would need an eight-foot door. An attached partition to the ceiling would have to be installed. All minutefold doors are not completely soundproof, but they do reduce the noise by one fifth. Out of the 1,200 doors we have installed in the last four years, not one of these doors has warped. If you would like to know more about these doors and see some samples; simply fill out the enclosed reply card and place it in the nearest mail box.

18. Rewrite the following letter for accuracy and better wording. From Harry Gibbons, Sales Manager, to Mr. J. T. Bolton, carpenter, Box 609, Bloomington, Illinois. Letterhead reads Allen and Jason Company, 908 Queen Street, Memphis 4, Tennessee. The date line is current.

Your concave and convex cutters are on the way. You will certainly receive them before the end of the month. They are being shipped by railway express—shipping charges, \$2.66 plus 3% tax on the total purchase price of \$86.

So you may get the specific motor you want, please check your preference on the enclosed form and send it to us today. You are sure to be pleased with any choice you make. We guarantee all of our motors and their shielded ball bearings are lubricated for 5,000 hours.

Your should receive your Craftsman Sharpening Table in about 10 days. There has been a strike at the aluminum plant, and we haven't been able to get enough materials to keep our stock up. They have assured us, however, that we should start receiving our ordered aluminum in another week at the latest.

You will be glad you waited for this particular table. It is one

of our best selling tables—built of sturdy aluminum and steel. The carpenters wants and needs's were the factors in the design of the table.

**19. Rewrite for directness and tone.**

Dear Mr. Prospective Supplier:

I have met with our engineers since your visit last Thursday, and discussed with them more fully our requirements in a stamping press. Your model C-311-B is well suited to our needs but we feel certain accessories may not be required by us.

Would you please let me know whether we could buy these presses without the guards, fly-wheel cage, and drop chute? If this is possible, what then would be the price reduction? We have our own economical ways to provide these accessories in the presses. To be frank, we have word that we can obtain a stripped press from another manufacturer who also has an excellent tool.

Our chief accountant also asks that I check with you as to what would be our monthly payments on a 24-month basis. He has the 12- and 18-month figures. You can see he is concerned about budgeting these machine payments. I am also awaiting word from you whether the machine installment period will be interest-free. Once operating we expect these presses to "pay their own way."

We do hope that you appreciate our viewpoints on this prospective purchase. We do want the machines, but we have our problems.

**20. Rewrite for economy and naturalness of phrasing, for positiveness, accuracy, and clarity.**

Dear Mr. Unsuccessful Quoter:

Reference your letter of June 20, may we say that we are disappointed in many ways that you were not successful bidder as per our quotation request #B-5004 (May 10). Your quote was competitive, but not the lowest received.

We would like to thank you for submitting a quotation as per our request, and to assure you of full consideration whenever in the future we prepare quotation requests for items which you manufacture.

As a possible assistance to you we would like to say that while your unit price was favorable compared to two bidders your service warranty was rather high.

We buy a fair quantity of steam equipment from time to time, and we sincerely hope that a certain portion of this business will go your way. We cannot, however, overlook high service contract costs which are an important element in over-all cost.

Thank you again for your interest in our regard.

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21. Correct the following letter for acceptable use of language. Improve the negative tone and supply specific details that will also perform resale functions on dining and bedroom accessories sent from the Hastings Furniture Company of Beauville, North Carolina, to Mr. D. D. Forest of the Reliable Furniture Company, 124 Grand Avenue, Elkhart, Indiana. Sign it as the credit sales manager.

Dear Mr. Forest:

The items you ordered April 27th have been sent to you in this morning's mail. You should receive these items in time for your Saturday morning customers.

Mr. Forest, we have granted you credit, with a tentative limit of \$100, at our usual terms of 2/10, n/30. The \$100 limitation is placed on all new customers. After a period of six months this limitation is lifted if the customer has proven to be a good credit risk. By doing business in this manner, the customers earn their good credit ratings. One customer told us that his good credit rating was better than money in the bank. A good credit rating is also helpful when you want credit elsewhere.

Mr. Forest, we sincerely hope you will be able to obtain a good credit rating . . . and that you will like our products.

22. Make all the improvements you can in the following form letter addressed to the faculty and staff of your school. It comes from a new motel near the campus.

Good Morning:

In an effort to introduce our dinning facilities to the xxx personell, I have inclosed a complementary card which intitles you to a \$1.00 (one dollar) discount on any dinner. This card is not valid after (a date two months later). I hope this discount will encourage you to take advantage of our new policy of sensible pricing coupled with superb cuisine, prepared to your taste by our continental chef. I am sure you will find dinning at The Inn Carriage Room, truely an enjoyable and ldisure evening. I invite you to inspect our 101 room "Quality" motel as well as our banquet facilities, capable of accommodating any future functions you may have. Looking foreward to meeting you in the near future, I remain,

23. Revise the following letter for improved order of points, you-view-point, positiveness, and economy of statement. It is from Lionel Toy Company, Rochester 4, New York, to Mrs. Tom Armstrong, Apt. 89, Veterans' Housing Unit, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dear Mrs. Armstrong:

We are sorry to advise you that we have not made the large outdoor play blocks for a long period of time. We find that the cost of constructing these is so prohibitive that very little volume can be realized on them. It is quite possibly true that you see these

in practically all nursery schools but in each instance it is generally true that one set is made up especially by hand for the nursery school. Thank you very much for your letter of April 28 and for your interest in Lionel toys. You may order directly from us. A catalogue and price list are enclosed.

24. Consider the following letter from the advertising manager of an insurance company to an insurance agency that sells policies of various companies. What about the plan? What about the tone? Rewrite to improve it any way you can.

This answers your memo of October 4, 19\_\_\_\_, asking whether we have any available mats for newspaper advertising on workmen's compensation. No, we do not, Willard, and for a very good reason. Newspaper advertising is a mass market media. Workmen's compensation insurance is not a mass market product.

Perhaps only one in a thousand reading your ad in the newspaper would be a prospect for workmen's compensation insurance but you would be paying for talking to the other nine hundred ninety-nine people who can't use what you are talking about. For pitching a special type of insurance, you would have to use a media that concentrates on the prospects for that type of insurance, such as a trade publication. You couldn't afford to pay the rates on such a trade publication unless it just covered your selling area. For instance, if your Chamber of Commerce put out a publication that was sent just to your local businessmen and you paid a circulation rate just to reach those people, then it might be feasible.

25. Analyze the good and bad elements of the following letter, considering all the points of content, tone, and method of presentation. Then rewrite it for the R. L. Ringer Publishing Company, Syracuse, New York. This letter is a refusal for free material requested by Miss Katie Lou Peek, University Place School, Huntsville, Alabama.

We regret to have to tell you, but we cannot send you ENGLISH FOR MEANING by Prestwood McKee or BUILDING BETTER ENGLISH by Mellie John and Paulene M. Yates. With the high cost of printing and publishing you can well understand our position. We have enclosed a list of some films that can be ordered to help you teach English to juniors in high school. The price list accompanies the film list. Won't you let us hear from you?

26. Rewrite the following letter for the Service Adjustment Manager, Atlanta, Oldsmobile Distribution Division, Specific Motors Corporation. The letter goes to Mr. John Perry, 216 Beauregard Drive, Carrollton, Georgia.

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Dear Mr. Perry:

We are in receipt of your letter reporting the failure of your car air conditioning unit. Since the car and the unit are three years old I suggest you see a local reputable dealer or air condition specialists and have him repair the unit. With as old a car as you have and with as many miles as you say (40,000) you have on the car, our company is not responsible for any replacements. The guarantee on the unit is for one year. Perhaps you should investigate the new models just out and see about trading in your old car.

27. Rewrite for accuracy, clarity, economy, and conviction the following letter transcribed for the signature of T. B. Collins, President, Nu-Tempo Manufacturing Company, 2284 Sunrise Boulevard, Los Angeles 24, California, to Mr. Emory Stapp, Director, University Alumni Foundation, Reid College, Los Alamos, California:

Dear Mr. Stapp:

Your Alumni Day will certainly be a delightful event. I have attended similiar programs, and have enjoyed them very, very much.

The next two month I will be in Europe inspecting ten major clothing industries. In addition to this tour, I have been engaged to visit the University of Helsinki in Finland and Oxford in England.

I am sure you understand that I must confine myself within limits. May I suggest to you that perhaps the vice president, Mr. James Noonan, could be persuaded to attend Alumni Day? He is also a graduate of the University, and I'm sure you would enjoy hearing him speak. He can be contacted here by phone or mail.

28. In the State Department of the Interior, Boston, you have been given the following letter from Stanley J. Gregory, 2031 Dneper Road, Springfield, Massachusetts, to answer:

"At Cub Scout meeting the other day, my friend, Paul Smith said you had a little book on LANDING ON THE MOON.

Please send a copy to me. I've enclosed 10 cents."

You can send him a booklet, *Facts about the Moon*, also done by the Department of Interior. In sending him this second booklet, minimize the negative effect in his not getting what he has asked for; emphasize efficiency in complying with his request; and favorably present your substitute. Because of so many requests the supply of the booklet *Landing on the Moon* is exhausted.

29. The program chairman for the next national convention of your professional association has asked you to take an important part on the program, not as a speaker but as a chairman of a session.

Your employer encourages employees to attend and participate in the meetings of their professional groups by paying all or part of the expenses of attending. But employees never know just how much the employer will pay until they get the answer in view of the specific situation. You have asked your employer how much expense money you may have this time, but have been told that the answer can come only when your request and numerous others are considered together and compared with available funds.

Furthermore, the convention dates are December 28-30 and you have been unable to get your wife to say whether your attending the convention will conflict with her Christmas holiday plans.

You'd be glad to take the assignment if favorable answers could be had from your two bosses, both of whom are delaying. You realize that the program chairman must proceed with his plans, so you must write him a negative reply, at least for now. You still hope to attend the convention and you will let the chairman know your decision as soon as it can be firm. If he wants to wait, that will be all right; but you advise him to get somebody else.

30. A big company manufacturing products competing with one you have devised is planning to put on the market one that would compete directly with yours. To help the designer of its product, the company has written you a somewhat detailed inquiry to get your suggestions. Actually the company and its designer should have known about your competing product, but you are forced to believe that they did not or they would not have had the cheek to send you the inquiry. Refuse to answer the inquiry. Consider the advisability of the straight-faced, joshing, and belittling tones that you might use.
31. From the editors of *Show*, 70 Park Avenue, New York 22. To charter subscribers of *USA # 1*. Rewrite to establish the desirability of a subscription to *Show*. It is a class magazine featuring articles on all the entertaining arts in the U.S. (opera, symphony, theatre, cinema, television, book reviews).

Dear Subscriber:

We are sorry to inform you that the new magazine you subscribed to and that we had such hopes for, *USA #1*, failed. In its place we will send you an entertaining magazine called *SHOW*. We do hope you enjoy it. Thanking you for your patronage.

32. Assume that you are the editor of a widely distributed free-subscription magazine put out by some branch of your state or school and that you suspect that many copies are going to people who do not really want them. Write a letter to clean up your mailing list.

Unless you provide some motivation and make the action easy, many of them will simply ignore you. You may include benefits to yourself, but emphasize benefits to your readers.

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Make clear that you are not interested in cutting off anybody who really wants the magazine. Also invite them to send you the names and addresses of people who might be interested in receiving it. Also check to be sure that you have the correct names and addresses of those who do want to continue on the mailing list.

33. As chairman of the Community Development Board you have designed a questionnaire to collect information about uses and needs of transportation facilities to and from Gainesville, Florida. The questionnaire has five columns headed

1. City or area destination
2. Number of trips during preceding twelve months
3. Means of transportation used (car, rail, air, bus)
4. Means you would have used if convenient
5. Number of trips not made because of inadequate or inconvenient transportation.

On the advice of a statistician, you have selected a stratified sample of Gainesville people to receive questionnaires. Your immediate job is to write a covering letter that will induce these people to fill out and return the questionnaires.

34. Rewrite the following letter to improve it in any way you can:

To: English professors

Dear Sir:

The forums committee of the Union is sponsoring a book review which we think will prove to be both interesting and beneficial to all of the students in your courses. With this thought in mind we have sought to ask you to convey to your students the fact that such a review is being held and the pertinent details such as when and where the review is to take place.

Dr. Wade Hall of the English department will review J. D. Salinger's latest work, *Franny and Zooey* on the night of December 14. The time is 8:30 P.M. and the place, Johnson Lounge on the second floor of the Union.

We would appreciate your frequent announcement of the review to your various classes and would like to extend a personal invitation to you to attend the review. Thanking you for your time and interest, I am,

Sincerely Yours,

35. How can you rewrite for improved you-viewpoint presentation in the beginning and in the action ending? From: Goshen Manufacturing Company, 3976 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta 16. To: George Shirley, Sales Manager of Till Company, one of your biggest agents, 2511 Viaduct Drive, Birmingham 6, Alabama.

Dear Mr. Shirley:

Our company is next month having the opening for our new warehouse in Tampa the 16th and 17th. It is similar to our warehouse in Jacksonville and the one which is being completed in Miami. It is an attractive building designed to make operations more rapid and efficient.

We would like to have you attend both days of our opening from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. The plan is to give the customer a tour of the building, show stock, and demonstrate the handling facilities. There will also be exhibits of all types of ferrous and nonferrous metals, as well as valves, fittings, fasteners, and gears. After speaking with someone with your experience and ability, we feel sure our customers will select the Till Company as their best source of supply.

The Goshen company will be happy to pay your expenses if you will be kind enough to reserve the 16th and 17th of next month to see the latest developments in steel warehouse construction.

36. Rewrite to improve the style of the following letter:

Protect your families  
With a steel  
Fall-out Shelter

In case of an air attack your family will need protection against atomic fall out. Dixie Shelters that have been approved by the Civil Defense will provide this protection.

These shelters have been completely welded from heavy gauge, 3-16 inch steel plate. They are covered with a coat of heavy asphalt tar and are water tight. A great variety of sizes are made with entrance ways to suit the terrain. Other accessories are as follows: ladder, hand-operated blower, filtered intake and exhaust, bunks, toilet, water tank, shelves, storage space, electrical inlet, auxiliary power plant, and geiger counter.

Dixie Shelters are also good protection against tornadoes. Living in the Southeast as you do, this will be an added benefit.

These shelters can be bought for as little as \$1,000 to \$2,000, depending on size and equipment and can be installed in only one day.

In your Southeastern area alone, 1500 home shelters have already been sold. Let us install one at your home so that you too can have this protection.

Inclosed is a reply card and picture folder. Please fill in the reply card and drop it in the mail. When we receive this card our representative, Lewis Fells, will promptly call on you.

Yours for protection

HARRY MOORE  
District Sales Manager

Encl: 1 reply card  
1 picture folder

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### **37. Rewrite for positiveness, you-attitude, and success consciousness.**

Dear Supplier:

Subject: a) Purchase Order T-1966, June 3.  
b) Our Follow-Ups of June 26 and July 3.

You have failed to respond to subject follow-up forms we sent you regarding delivery information on material on subject purchase order. We are sending you this letter inquiry on delivery dates as we are in urgent need of the material on order. Please telephone or wire your delivery information as requested in this letter.

We are in such urgent need of this material that we will have to shut-down our thermostat sub-assembly line next month if we do not have the material from you by then. This would disrupt our entire production schedules and be extremely costly to us.

As we plan an over-all production increase of 10-15% these next 12 months, we are hoping that you can now prove to be a dependable supplier when our needs are not as great as anticipated later.

We will await your call or wire on this urgent matter.

### **38. Rewrite for clarity, economy, and naturalness of phrasing.**

Dear Mr. Supplier:

Subject: Purchase Order T-3019, June 15.

Under separate cover we are returning 130 defective lid assemblies #106-A as received against subject purchase order on July 10. These assemblies are returned for replacement by you as soon as possible.

The defect noted in these lid assemblies by our Quality Control department is that the threaded hub is crookedly soldered onto the lid. When the lid assembly is screwed onto shaft in final assembly operation, a flush lid fit cannot be obtained.

The July 10 lid assembly shipment from you represents the highest reject percentage yet found—130 out of 1000—or 13%. Because of past mix-ups in paper work we will withhold payment on your invoice for these 1000 pieces until satisfactory replacements are received by us for the 130 defective pieces.

Our engineers again suggest that you use the lid solder jig as per the model delivered to you in May. We feel this jig can eliminate, or greatly reduce, reject percent on your lid assemblies.

Please be assured that we stand ready to work with you further on solving this hub alignment problem. We urgently need acceptable parts in the full quantities as ordered as our production requirements are running high.

39. Revise the following letter, correcting errors and improving phrasing as necessary. Improve for positive presentation, success consciousness, and you-viewpoint presentation. It is addressed to Lyman Brothers, Canton, Ohio, and is signed by the sales manager for the L. B. Trice Wholesale Company, 2416 Independence Drive, Indianapolis 19. Set it up in the physical arrangement indicated by your instructor.

Gentlemen:

On March 17 you placed an order with us for two dozen Seabreeze oscillating fans which we have discontinued. We are now exclusive dealers for Matthews fans. The nearest place to purchase the Seabreeze fan is Gardner-Perkins and Simmons in Cleveland, Ohio.

You will find the Matthews fan has better insulation and better wearing qualities, and tests conducted by GOOD HOUSEKEEPING magazine have showed this Matthews fan to deliver 12 per cent more cubic feet of air per minute with the same current consumption. In addition, you will find your costumers to be better satisfied with the dull crackle-finish which means a better looking fan over a longer period of time.

The Matthews fan is available in an additional third popular size, the eight-inch, which many home-users want. These fans are quoted, per dozen, at \$85 for the 8-inch, \$130 for the 10-inch, and \$170 for the 12-inch. The Matthews fans carry a mark-up of 50%. This means greater profits for you, the dealer. The Matthews fans carry a greater markup for the dealer than other nationally advertised fans.

So there will be no further delay in your order, simply take the stamped addressed card, place an X by the fans you want and drop the card in the nearest mail box. Your fans will be shipped COD on Hiller Truck Lines, Inc.

We hope you will find our service satisfactory.

40. Auto insurance rates depend on various facts, including type and age of car and driver, extent and kind of use made of the car, location. . . . Write a form letter to go with an addressed and stamped questionnaire card to collect necessary information from a big insurance company's policyholders whose policies are about ready for renewal. The general question is whether the rates on the old policy will be appropriate on the renewal policy the company will soon be preparing. The State requires insurance companies to classify policyholders carefully and charge specified rates according to the conditions. Out-of-date or incorrect information could cause the rates on one's insurance to be either too high or too low.

Filling out the reply card takes only 30 seconds. Your letter does not ask the questions but only induces the policyholder to fill out and return the card.



## **Part Three**

# **HOW TO WIN THE READER'S APPROVAL AND MOTIVATE HIM TO ACTION**



# V. Neutral and Good-News Messages

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Direct Inquiries and Requests

Favorable Replies

    Replies to Inquiries without Sales Possibilities

        Direct Beginning

        Completeness of Coverage

        Resale

    Replies to Inquiries with Sales Possibilities

        Getting Started Positively

        Answering All Questions

        Subordinating Unfavorable Information

        Handling Price

        Securing Action

Form Letters

Orders

Standard Acknowledgments

Credit Approvals

    Explanation of Terms

    Establishing the Basis for Credit

    Stimulating Sales

    Making the Customer Welcome

Simple Claims and Adjustment Approvals

    Direct Claims

    Adjustment Approvals

        Adjustment Policies

        Analysis and Classification of Adjustments

        Attitude of the Adjuster

        Adjustment Tools and Techniques

            Using Resale

            Making Positive Explanations

            Handling Inherent Negatives

    Letters Approving the Adjustment

EDWARD HALL GARDNER, in one of the pioneer books on business writing, said, "Good news is its own best harbinger"—and that statement is just as applicable today. As you read back in Chapter IV, messages that give the reader what he wants should do so in the opening phrases. The emphasis should be on speed, specificness, and

economy. Inquiries, favorable replies, adjustment approvals, and credit approvals are typical of A-plan, direct-style letters.

Routine claims also should be handled with directness and dispatch, since they are reports welcomed by any firm as means for improving service.

Similarly, in courtesy exchanges of information about personnel and credit applicants—where regardless of the content of the message, the interpersonal relationship of reader and writer is not affected—the message should begin directly with the subject.

Simplest to write are inquiries and requests.

### DIRECT INQUIRIES AND REQUESTS

Any firm that stays in business welcomes inquiries about products, services, operations, and personnel. When a businessman reads an inquiry concerning the product(s) or service(s) that the firm sells, he is motivated to respond by the possibility of making a sale and a consequent profit—the strongest business motive. Certainly such inquiries are good-news messages. Or he may answer an inquiry about routine operations out of simple business friendship. He will also answer requests for information about people because it is an established business courtesy to give such information for business purposes (the principle of reciprocity).

In no case would the reader's attitude toward such inquiries be negative; and if it is not one of eagerness to comply, at least it is willingness.

If your inquiry is about a product or service and is addressed to the manufacturer, distributor, or other agency responsible for its successful marketing, you have no concern about whether the letter is welcome. You have no problem of motivating a response; the chance of making a sale motivates. Rather, your problem is that of letting your reader know exactly what you want, so that the willing reader can give you the necessary information with as little expenditure of time and energy as possible.

Resolve this problem by beginning directly and by being specific and concise. Requests for catalogues, price lists, descriptive folders, and other phases of information about products and services should be written with the same directness, specificity, and brevity as the following:

What choice of colors does a buyer have in the shower curtains you advertised in the November *Ladies' Home Journal*?

At what store(s) are they available in Mobile?

This example, you will note, gets right down to brass tacks with a direct question and the key specific phrase "choice of color" rather than the vague, stereotyped request for "more information." And the pinpointing phrase "in Mobile" further helps the writer of the replying letter to send exactly the information that is needed.

The following letter to a resort hotel is another good example of desirable directness and specificity:

Please send me descriptive material about your accommodations, recreational facilities, and rates.

My wife, sixteen-year-old daughter, and I are planning a two- or three-weeks' stay in the South this fall and are considering the Edge-water Gulf.

If the letter were sent without the second paragraph, the writer would get the most necessary information in general terms. (He would probably get much more than he needs because the hotel man, not knowing just what to tell, would tell everything and thus waste his own and his reader's time.) With the special information given in the second paragraph, however, the hotel man can write a reply which contains necessary general information and only the special information that would be of interest to this family group.

He would be helped even more had the writer added a specific paragraph indicating special interests, such as:

My wife and I are primarily interested in the golf facilities; my wife and daughter are also interested in dinner dancing; our daughter insists that she be able to ride horseback every day.

In some inquiries you can help yourself as well as the responder if you make replying easy. Some provision for putting the answer(s) on the inquiring letter accelerates the reply and enables the responding firm to cut down on letter costs. The following inquiry (which is a form letter) about a credit applicant is a typical example (the fact that the subject matter is a person rather than a product or service makes no difference as far as writing style and pattern are concerned):

La Casa Blanca  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
The Credit Department, please

Gentlemen:

Will you please give us the confidential information requested below?

In applying for credit with us, the applicant gave us your name as a reference.

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We shall appreciate this courtesy. Any time we can return the favor, please call on us.

Very truly yours

Credit Manager

Applicant: John Y. Bowen

Length of time sold on credit \_\_\_\_\_

Credit limit (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ Credit terms \_\_\_\_\_

Current amount due \_\_\_\_\_ Past due \_\_\_\_\_

Highest credit extended \_\_\_\_\_ Most recent credit \_\_\_\_\_

Paying habits \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

The letter lends itself to form treatment because there are no atypical, off-the-beaten-path questions necessary. (Most business firms have to handle inquiries about credit applicants and job seekers with form letters because of time, money, and personnel limitations.) But, form letter or special letter, the important considerations of directness, specificity, and conciseness remain the same.

When questions are clear cut, enabling the responder to supply specific data in reasonably short form (frequently by just jotting down the answers on the inquiring letter), the desirable plan of the letter is often an explanation of the purpose of the letter, followed by tabulated, numbered questions, as in the following:

### SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT RECONDITIONED LEKTRASWEEPS

Before deciding whether to drive into Birmingham to inspect the vacuum cleaners you advertised in last Sunday's *News*, I need answers to the following questions:

1. Do the reconditioned Lektrasweeps come equipped with a standard 1-hp motor?
2. What kind and how many attachments do you include at \$34.95?
3. Does your written two-year guarantee include replacement or repairs, without charge, of any and all defective parts that might result in the unsatisfactory service of the equipment?
4. If so, will replacement or repairs be made by your representative in my home?
5. Is there a trial period, say for two weeks, at the end of which I could return the cleaner if it proved unsatisfactory, and get a full refund?

I shall be grateful for this information.

Certainly such a letter is easily written and easily read. But if questions require detailed answers for satisfactory information, if out-of-the-ordinary questions are involved, and if they require explanation before the reader can get a clear picture of exactly what the writer wants to know, then they are better set out in expository paragraph form, as in the following letter about a dishwasher:

**SUBJECT: INQUIRY ABOUT THE \$49.50 DISHWHISK**

How complex—and expensive—is installation of the Dishwhisk you advertised on page 68 of the September 23d *Post*?

I'm interested in a dishwasher, and I certainly am attracted by this price. But can your unit be attached without plumbing changes, once the present unit is removed? On my sink now is a unit with hot and cold knobs and a single mixing faucet.

Aerated suds sound economical and efficient, but will low water pressure reduce their cleansing effectiveness? Because low water pressure is the rule rather than the exception in this community, this is an important consideration.

Are new soap and water used for each piece to be washed? The use of an excessive amount of soap and water could easily cancel the initial saving in a short time.

I shall appreciate your answers to these questions, the name and address of a local owner of a Dishwhisk, and the name of a local dealer.

Note that the inquiry started with a direct question. Such a beginning is the preferable form. The request should come before explanations of why you ask or should be interwoven with these explanations, because (1) a question commands more attention than a statement, (2) the reader sees the reason for the explanation, and (3) that arrangement nearly always saves words. Hence the desirability of beginning the following personnel inquiry the way the writer did:

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT JAMES R. SULLIVAN**

While Mr. Sullivan worked under you as a part-time instructor in marketing, did he show an aptitude for selling? Was he naturally friendly and able to get along with faculty and students alike?

We are considering him for the job of head salesman in the Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina territory. Since he listed you as a former supervisor, we shall welcome your comments in the light of the following explanation.

The job will take much time and energy and will also require that he be away from his family a great deal. Do you think he will do his best work under these conditions? And has he demonstrated physical stamina and willingness suggesting that he can stand up under the strain of much traveling for long periods?

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As head salesman he will have to supervise the work of two junior salesmen in this territory. We are interested, therefore, in your evaluation of his leadership ability.

Naturally we are looking for someone who will be permanent, since our men need to know their territories and customers quite well before they can sell enough to suit themselves or us. Do you believe Sullivan will remain in the business world for any length of time, or do you expect him to return to school to continue his graduate work?

We shall appreciate your giving us this and any other confidential information that will help us come to a decision, and shall be glad to help you in the same way when we can.

Credit inquiries from one business house to another are as routine as are those about job applicants. Both are characterized by directness, conciseness, and specificness. And because they ask for the same kind of information over and over again, in most instances they should be forms (like the one shown on p. 142).

When, however, special circumstances arise which the form letter does not cover, you're probably better off to write a special letter. Like any direct request, it should get right down to business:

*Subject: Credit Inquiry about Mr. H. F. Green, Grocer, Vinita, Oklahoma*

Will you please send us a confidential summary of your credit experience with Mr. Green?

Naturally we'd like to have the usual items which reveal his buying and paying habits.

But since we learned from one of the companies here in McAlester that Mr. Green buys a large amount of his supplies from you and that he has given your name as a credit reference very recently, we'd like to have your explanation of why he did not list your firm when he applied for credit with us.

We shall appreciate your help and shall be glad to assist you in the same way when we can.

When you ask your reader to give information about people, as in the two preceding letters, both you and he face a special problem. You are asking him to endanger himself with the libel laws. It is your duty to help him protect himself as far as possible. Of course, if he tells the truth, he has the one most important piece of protection; but truth alone is not complete protection in some states. You can help by making his informative letter what the lawyers call a privileged communication. You show him that you have an interest to protect, you promise to keep the information confidential, and (if true) you tell him that the inquiry was authorized. In his response,

then, he shows that all those conditions exist. Otherwise, inquiries and replies about people are the same as those about other things.

The most important considerations for you to keep in mind about routine (direct) inquiries and requests are to get started in a hurry, to be as specific in your questions as you can, and to explain enough (but only enough) for your reader to answer well and easily. (The appended check list of suggestions (p. 632) will help you with most of your inquiry problems, though, of course, it is neither a cover-all nor a cure-all.)

Direct credit applications—those written when no question exists about the desirability of the account—are just as simple and concise as other direct inquiries.

Most consumers who apply for credit locally do so orally in a visit to the credit department of the business, though some do it with a telephone call. Some applicants, however, not wanting to bother with a visit to the store and realizing that certain investigation will have to be made, prefer to write a letter. Certainly that is the more appropriate action when the application is directed to an out-of-town store.

Since requests are welcomed, a direct-style letter immediately phrasing the request and giving the necessary information is appropriate:

Will you please open a charge account in the name of

Mr. or Mrs. J. T. Holloway  
76 Idlewild Drive  
Dallas, Texas

We have just moved here from Denver, where our address was 27 Crescent Drive.

Stores with which we have had accounts for about five years in Denver are The White House, Foley's, J. P. Price and Co., and The Town and Country Shop.

I am employed as a supervisor at the L. B. Price Distributing Company, where I earn about \$8,500 annually; Mrs. Holloway is not employed.

The Merchants National Bank handles our checking account.

Despite having given enough information of the kinds usually required as a basis for the extension or refusal of the credit, the writer of the foregoing letter need not be surprised to receive an application from the store; most stores have standard forms which they want all charge customers to fill in and sign. Many of these are credit agreements. They are the same kind of form you might sign if you made application in person. In addition to blank spaces for the kind of information given in the foregoing example, they often have blanks

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for indicating a business address, for indicating whether the applicant owns or rents his home, whether his bank account is a checking account or a savings account, and for listing personal references. Any adaptation of the form illustrated in the sample credit inquiry on page 142 is suitable. Many firms find a card is easier to work with than a letter. The information wanted and the form are so standardized and routine that an applicant may well write no more than a perfunctory

Will you please send me the necessary form(s) for arranging a charge account with you?

Requests from business firms of national reputation, solidly capitalized and with an unquestioned rating, are also perfunctory. Information about them is readily available in any number of credit sources. The acceptability of their credit is assumed; so the application for it is only by implication. Signed by an authorized agent (usually a purchasing agent), the letter might contain no more than the following:

Please ship subject to your usual terms 6 dozen Samson 10-inch locking plier wrenches.

If the agent thinks the company name might not be recognized at once, he might add:

We are listed in Dun & Bradstreet.

If the company is not listed in any source which can be checked readily, he may write in addition to the order sentence above, the following:

We have done credit business with

The L. B. Price Company, Dallas 12, Texas.

The Vendo Company, Chicago 18, Illinois.

T. L. Painter & Co., Kansas City 9, Missouri.

Our most recent certified financial statement is enclosed.

### **FAVORABLE REPLIES**

Any company desiring the good will of the public replies to all reasonable inquiries—and does so promptly. If a delay is necessary, some explanation should go forward to the inquirer indicating the reason and approximately when he can expect a complete answer, as in the following note:

Your request for information about palletization can best be answered by Mr. J. S. McConnough, our Sales Promotion and Advertising Manager, who will be in California for another ten days.

Shortly after he returns to the office, he will write you.

Here is another sample:

We shall send you your copy of *Color Counts* about March 15, when we expect the revision from the printers.

This new edition will show the true colors and will picture in detail all the popular patterns of Siesta ware, including the ones introduced just this year.

You will enjoy it when you receive it.

The first situation appears to contain no possibilities of sales but, as in the case of any inquiry, certainly represents a good opportunity to make a friend for the firm. The second situation obviously represents someone with an active interest in the product sold by the firm. Proper handling might well lead to a sale.

Because some incoming letters ask only for assistance, whereas others readily indicate a potential customer, this discussion of replies is divided into (1) replies to inquiries without apparent sales possibilities (including reports dealing with personnel and credit applicants) and (2) replies to inquiries with sales possibilities.

### **Replies to Inquiries without Sales Possibilities**

When someone asks you for something, you say either "Yes" or "No"—in an A-plan letter or a B-plan letter. For all practical purposes, an undecided, noncommittal response like "Well, I'll think it over" is a refusal and needs to be handled in the inductive style (reasons before conclusion) of a B-plan letter. This discussion, therefore, concerns itself only with letters complying with the request. Refusals and modified refusals are treated later.

In letters which say "Yes," particular points you need to watch are the direct beginning, completeness of coverage, and (when appropriate) resale.

**Direct Beginning.** The fundamental principle in all A-plan replies is to say "Yes" immediately and thus gain increased good will, as well as save time and words. When you can do what the reader has asked you to do, begin your letter by a statement indicating (in line with the circumstances)

1. That you have done it (preferably),
2. That you are doing it, or
3. That you will do it.

Your compliance with the reader's request is the point of greatest interest to him—of far greater interest than any expressions of gratitude or gladness. And from the standpoint of economical writing, the

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direct beginning cuts through and establishes many ideas by implication, thus shortening your letter copy considerably. Often the letter need contain no more than the notification of compliance, as in this example:

We are glad to send you with this letter the last three annual reports of National Reaper, Inc., and add your name to our mailing list to receive future copies as they are released around March 1 each year.

The direct beginning also establishes a cheerful, ungrudging tone for the letter and eliminates pomposness—at least from the all-important beginning. Observe the difference between the following original and revision:

### INDIRECT, WORDY, GRUDGING

We have your request for our HOW book.

It was prepared primarily for material-handling engineers, and so we were not prepared for the numerous requests we have received from schools. We are sending you one, however, and hope you will find it helpful.

If there is any other way we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on us.

### DIRECT, COMPACT, CHEERFUL

Here is the HOW book you asked for.

It was prepared after extensive research by our own material-handling engineers with the assistance of outside consultants and plant men who specialize in material-handling methods and procedures. We're sure you'll find it useful in the classroom.

Call on us again when you think we can help.

In response to a request for a copy of a manual on letters, the following is a good example:

Here is your complimentary copy of *Better Letters*, Professor Duke.

I hope you'll be able to use it in developing the practical note you desire in your classes.

Since the manual was compiled from company correspondence and contains actual names and other confidential material, will you please not quote directly from it? I'm sure you'll be able to use it successfully by substituting other names and figures when you want to paraphrase an example.

Several Harwood graduates are doing excellent jobs with Southern Atlantic. I hope you will have other qualified graduating seniors to recommend to Mr. R. B. Jones when he comes to your campus in February.

And in accepting the chairmanship of a civic drive, the writer of the following letter created extra good will for himself:

You certainly may count on me to do everything I can to make this year's Small Business Division exceed its quota for the Community Chest.

Send me the names of the division members as soon as you can, please, so that we can get organized. I'd like to have a preliminary meeting as soon as possible.

We'll certainly appreciate any suggestions pointing to more effective performance.

In response to a request for material on palletization, one man wrote:

Although there seems to be a dearth of palletization material in textbooks, here are two you may want to study if you haven't already:

Harry E. Stocker, *Materials Handling*, Prentice-Hall, New York, 1959.

Mathews W. Potts, *Materials Handling Equipment*, Pitman, New York, 1961.

The following magazines have market research departments and can supply reprints of articles if you'll write them explaining just what information you wish:

*Modern Material Handling*, 131 Clarendon Street, Boston 16.

*Flow*, 1240 Ontario Street, Cleveland 13.

*Factory Management & Maintenance*, McGraw-Hill, New York.

*American Machinist*, 520 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

*Industry & Power*, St. Joseph, Michigan.

*Western Canner & Packer*, 121 Second Street, San Francisco.

In the attached envelope I am sending you a copy of our latest catalogue and the last four issues of our house organ, *Material Handling News*.

We're glad to pass these suggestions on to you and to send this material along; we realize that today's students are tomorrow's material-handling engineers.

Good luck on the thesis. Call on us again if we can help.

You will note that not one of the foregoing letters wasted any words referring to receipt of the inquiry. The direct beginning makes such references unnecessary and saves space better used for worthwhile information.

**Completeness of Coverage.** Obviously, you need to take up every question in an inquiring letter; when you fail to do so, extra correspondence results (or your reader marks you up as careless, indifferent, or ignorant). There will be times, of course, when you can't answer—sometimes because you don't know, sometimes because it is information you can't reveal. In either case, simply tell your reader that, but don't ignore his question.

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When the questions call for strictly factual answers, when the requesting letter tabulates questions and leaves space for answering on the letter, your job is easy. When the necessary answers are evaluative and expository in form, your job is sometimes not so easy.

The following personnel report is in answer to an inquiry about the subject's selling ability, personality, cultural background, character, and integrity. Note that the negative information the writer felt was necessary to establish is embedded in the letter and interpreted along with a positive characteristic of the applicant:

*Subject:* Confidential report by request on Travis Brannon as a prospective book salesman

Mr. Brannon graded papers, had conferences with students, and did clerical jobs as a student assistant in my office during the fall semester last year. He is a careful, accurate worker with lots of initiative. And he makes friends readily.

I got to know Travis quite well while he made two A's in my courses, Sales Management and Public Relations. His questions in class and in conferences showed a keen understanding of business problems and a calm, practical approach to their solution. And his term reports in both cases showed solid, serious, yet original, business thinking. Impressed with his scholastic performance, his friendliness and ability to get along with people, and his obvious wide range of interests in many things (literature, drama, music), I asked him to be my assistant.

I particularly liked the quickness with which Travis caught on to assigned jobs and the willingness and accuracy with which he did a job every time it came up after I had explained it to him only once. On many small jobs and some not so small he went ahead and did what needed to be done without being told.

As he demonstrated ability, I let him do more and more. And he accepted the added responsibility and authority with obvious delight! As a result of such unbridled enthusiasm, I occasionally had to change a grade or contradict what he had told a student in conference. When that happened, he was noticeably silent for a few days; then he apparently forgot the incident and became his cheerfully helpful self again.

I must say, Mr. Parks, that I never had to lower a grade Travis gave a student! And he was hardest on his friends. I never had one single reason to suspect that any student had an inside track with him. He was completely trustworthy with examinations, grade records, and the like.

Perhaps the most noticeable things about Travis are his eagerness to do his job, his efficiency in making use of all his time, and his general alertness. These qualities, though they sometimes made him

officious in interrupting my conferences with students and colleagues, stood him in good stead with students and faculty alike.

I feel sure that if Travis walked into the office of a college professor on almost any campus, the reaction toward him and your company would be favorable.

In probably the majority of cases requesting information about an applicant for credit, all you'll need to do is look at your customer's record and fill in the blanks provided on the inquiring letter. But when some atypical factor presents itself (or when the inquiring firm does not provide a blank making your reply quick and easy), you'll need to write a special letter.

We do not mean to imply here that all credit reports are letters, for most of them are not; the bulk of credit information distributed in this country from credit-rating and credit-reporting agencies goes out in special report forms. That is a small point, however, for in report form or letter form, the useful credit summary covers essentially the same material:

- Age of account (how long on the books).
- Credit or trading limit (maximum allowed; sometimes labeled "highest credit extended").
- Buying habits (typical or average purchase, annual volume).
- Paying habits *in relation to terms* (identify the terms and show how customer meets them).
- Present status of the account (amount now on the books, what part is overdue, and how long overdue).

In addition to the foregoing information, you may want to incorporate explanations of the effects of local conditions on the size and timing of purchases or on paying habits. And, of course, any unusual question directly put to you—like the one about Mr. Green—requires a direct answer. Since it is usually the reason for the special letter, it often merits the beginning position, like this:

**SUBJECT: CREDIT REPORT ON MR. H. F. GREEN, VINITA, OKLAHOMA**

Mr. Green, your applicant for credit, has been on our books since August, 1957. Since our relations have always been satisfactory from our point of view, I suspect that he failed to list our name as a reference because he was a little miffed with us about a month ago because we guessed wrong on one of his vague orders.

We've been safe in allowing him credit up to \$700 several times. He has a yearly account of about \$4,000; his monthly purchases vary from \$300 in the summer to \$700 in the fall. When crop money in the fall spurs payments, Mr. Green generally takes advantage of our 2/10 EOM discount. With only a few exceptions, he has paid

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his net bill by the 30th. On the two occasions that we had to press him for collection, he paid up promptly.

Right now is the slack season in the farming regions; so Mr. Green has let ride his May and June accounts totaling \$700.30. Of this amount, only the May bill of \$382.40 is now overdue. Since, on June 16, he sent in his \$366.60 check in payment of his April account, we know that Mr. Green pays his bills as soon as he gets his money. A retired farmer who still owns three farms, he is the sole owner of his modest store.

I am glad to send you, at your request, this confidential letter about Mr. Green.

**Resale.** Perhaps our suggestion to incorporate resale material in a reply to an inquiry without sales possibilities may strike you as unnecessary—even odd. But look back a moment at the contrasting samples relating to the HOW book on page 148 and note the different impressions created. The revised direct sample words the additional comment on the book in such a way as to make the reader realize that he is getting something special. Furthermore, it enhances the cordiality established by the direct beginning and eliminates any impression of curtness and abruptness that might be reflected from a one-sentence letter.

Note how in the following letter the writer not only applies resale on the booklet requested but goes a step further by sending something additional and offering to do more:

Of course you may have copies of our booklet; four of them are enclosed with this letter. They'll certainly help to show those future business leaders you spoke of something about how a direct-mail agency operates.

What's more, we're sending you a dividend: a copy of the speech Mr. Ray made at the DMAA meeting in Detroit last month. Some folks have said that it makes some pretty arresting statements about the uses and limitations of direct mail. You and your students will get something from this too, we think.

Call on us again; we're always glad to do what we can.

Certainly it is not possible to apply resale in every reply. In reports about people, for instance, it is out of place. But in situations where you send information (especially in the form of booklets, brochures, or leaflets), there's every reason why you should try to enhance the desirability of what you've done and to offer to help out again (unless you specifically do not want to).

The reminder check list on pages 634–35 summarizes the more important points to keep in mind as you write replies complying with a reader's request which has no sales possibilities.

## Replies to Inquiries with Sales Possibilities

Failure to answer inquiries and requests of the types we have been discussing will mark you as an uncooperative boor and probably lose you a good many sales in the long run; but failure to answer inquiries with direct sales possibilities is sooner or later business suicide.

When someone sends you an inquiry about your goods or services, he shows clearly that he recognizes an unsatisfied need or desire; he further implies that your product might satisfy it. Whether he asks for manufacturing data, a price list, a catalogue or descriptive folder, or the name of your nearest dealer, he seems to be an *interested*, potential customer—in other words, a prospect. If he receives satisfactory information and treatment, he'll probably be a real customer.

Your job of giving him what he wants is certainly much easier than making a sale through the usual sales letter that has to start from scratch with a "cold" prospect (as discussed in Chapter IX), because the inquirer is already interested. He has practically invited you to send him a sales letter.

Although you will be able to write better invited sales letters after studying special sales techniques, we take them up here because they are the most significant kind of reply that any business firm sends. They are more than good-will builders: they are sales clinchers. Accordingly, they draw on the principles discussed under Persuasion principles in Chapter IV.

As a writer of a reply to an inquiry with sales possibilities, you have no problem of securing attentive interest; your main problem is to tell enough to overcome reluctance, to tell it convincingly, and to get the reader to take the appropriate steps that lead to a sale. Your attention, then, must be given to getting started favorably, answering all questions, subordinating unfavorable information, handling price positively, and stimulating action.

**Getting Started Positively.** When a prospective customer writes you the equivalent of "Tell me more," he certainly is going to feel that he has had cold water thrown in his face with an indifferent reply like this:

There is an Endurtone company in your locality. Kindly contact them with your problem.

Such unconcern sends many readers to other sources for their needs. This, of course, is an extreme example, but it happens often enough to merit special warning.

The thing the reader most wants to know is the information he has requested—as specifically as you can give it to him. He is far more interested in such information than in any of your expressions of pleasure or gratitude. But in most cases involving a detailed inquiry,

you will want to check the order of your reader's questions before framing your reply. Some of his requests for information you can answer with more positiveness than others; one of these is what you should start with, as in the following examples:

With your Pow-R-Pac you will feel safe even when traveling alone at night on the country roads you spoke of.

The Rover bicycle that you saw advertised in *U.S. Youth* is made of light-weight, high-grade steel of the same quality used in motor bikes.

Yes, Mr. Baines, the base and standard of the Richmond Lamp you saw in *Home and Yard* are of solid brass. They will blend in tastefully with almost any style of 18th-century furnishings.

When you can answer "Yes," that is the information you should choose for your opening. Such positiveness stimulates enthusiasm and increases the desire to read further.

**Answering All Questions.** In some instances you cannot give the information your reader has asked of you. For example, the letter about the Stair-Traveller (p. 111) could not give cost details because installation varies according to the placement of the machine in a particular dwelling. The visit of the representative (clearly referred to) would have to clear up that point. If you cannot supply an answer, do not ignore it. Such action on your part only leads to suspicion, irritation, or disgust on your reader's part. Indicate that you are supplying the information in some other way or that you are in the process of finding out.

Most of the time you can give all the information the reader has requested, even though it runs to considerable length. The following reply to the request for more information about Reconditioned Lektrasweeps (p. 142) is a good letter not only because of good you-viewpoint and positiveness but also because it answers every question of the inquiring letter:

The reconditioned Lektrasweep that you asked about has the following attachments: a 6-inch upholstery brush, a 6-inch lamp-shade brush, a 12-inch prober, and a plastic blower attachment, in addition to the standard 12-inch rug brush.

These are the same attachments assembled the same way as in vacuum cleaners costing \$40-80 more. Were we to include a 1-hp motor with the Lektrasweep (necessary only for spraying attachments), the price would have to be considerably increased. Since most satisfied users want their Lektrasweeps for cleaning purposes only, we eliminate the spray attachments and thus are able to give you a good low-cost cleaner operating efficiently on a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -hp motor.

Next time you're in Birmingham, come in and let us demonstrate a Lektrasweep for you at 1423 Second Avenue North. After a thorough test of its effectiveness in picking up dust, lint, and other particles from rugs, upholstery, and walls, you'll see why we are so confident of the Lektrasweep. Though we consider all sales final (another of the economies resulting in the low price of your Lektrasweep), the Lektrasweep guarantee protects you against mechanical failures for a full two years.

If any of the parts fail because of defective workmanship, specially trained service men at the central plant in Cleveland will put your Lektrasweep in service again and return it to you within a week's time. As long as the machine shows evidence of proper care, as explained on the written guarantee, we absorb the charges for servicing and new parts, and return your Lektrasweep, charges prepaid. The 291 returns to the central plant out of the 10,091 Lektrasweeps sold have been handled to the customers' satisfaction.

I believe we have the sweeper you'll find convenient for your cleaning. The brown crackle finish will resist nicks and scratches and will be easy to keep clean. The quiet operation of the motor is especially desirable in small living quarters. Another convenience is the 20-foot cord, which enables you to clean an entire room without having to switch from one wall plug to another.

If for some reason you'd like your Lektrasweep before you can get over to Birmingham, use the enclosed order blank and reply envelope for sending us your payment and instructions. You can be enjoying easy Lektrasweeping the day after we hear from you.

This is a particularly difficult letter to write because so many of the questions had to be answered with limitations, reservations, or implied "No."

*Subordinating Unfavorable Information.* It would have been very poor salesmanship if the Lektrasweep letter had started with—

The Lektrasweep is equipped with a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -hp motor.

or with

No, the Lektrasweep does not have a 1-hp motor.

Likewise, if the writer of the Stair-Traveller letter had elected to begin with

The Stair-Traveller you are interested in will not work on a stair with a turn in the middle,

the lady's interest would very likely have decreased immediately and maybe vanished. But by establishing favorable information before stating this negative fact and by stating the negative in its positive form ("as it is designed only for straight stairways"), the writer hoped to overcome the effect of the disappointing news. Explaining the

necessary installation in terms of simplicity and economy (the positive corollary) further helped to cushion the effect.

Another case will more firmly implant the reasons for positive handling of unfavorable information in invited sales. The inquiry read as follows:

Please give me the answers to the following questions about the Roanoke lamp advertised on p. 27 of the December *Home and Yard*:

1. Is it 3-way?
2. Is the shade parchment or paper?
3. Is the shade available in a design as well as the single color you pictured? Since the pair of lamps will be in front of plain drapes, my wife would prefer shades with some design.
4. Is the Roanoke weighted to prevent tipping?
5. Is the base real brass or an alloy?
6. If we should order a pair and find after placing them with our 18th-century living-room furnishings that the lamps are not what we want, may we return them and have our money refunded?

Answers to questions 1, 3, 4, and 6 contained negative information. Here is one way of handling this inquiry to turn it into a sale despite the unfavorable circumstances:

Yes, the base and standard of the Roanoke lamp you saw in *Home and Yard* are of solid brass, which will blend in tastefully with almost any style of 18th-century furnishings.

For durability and ease in cleaning, the 10-inch shade is light-weight metal. Either the forest green or the royal red shade will contrast effectively with your drapes, and the quarter-inch gold bands around the top and bottom give the Roanoke lamp a distinction which most of our customers prefer to a design.

The white lining of the shade and the milk-white bone china reflector enable the single 150-watt bulb to give you good reading light—10 foot-candles within a radius of 8 feet, which is more than the minimum recommended by the American Institute of Lighting. Then, too, the indirect lighting reflected from the ceiling is pleasant for conversational groups.

To make the Roanoke more stable than other lamps of this size and shape, our designers put six claw feet instead of the usual four on the base and thus eliminated the necessity for weighting. Claw feet, as you know, are characteristic of much 18th-century design.

You and Mrs. Baines will agree that the Roanoke is a handsome, efficient lamp when you place a pair of them in your own living room. Should you decide to return them within ten days of our shipping date, we will refund your money less shipping charges.

Use the enclosed order blank and envelope to tell us your choice of color. Include with the order blank your check or money order for

\$40 (including shipping charges). Within five days after we hear from you, you will be enjoying your Roanoke lamps, which will give you good lighting at a moderate price and will make appropriately decorative additions to your living room.

The letter wisely begins and ends with positive ideas and, as positively as circumstances permit, establishes the negative answers of "No, the Roanoke is not 3-way; no, it is not weighted; no, the shade is not available in a design; no, we won't refund *all* your money if you return them." It does so through the usual means available to any writer: embedded position and positive statement.

**Handling Price.** In most business situations no other talk is as loud as that concerned with dollars and cents. Receiving money is pleasant; parting with money is hard.

When you have a genuine bargain, a real price reduction, that information may be the best lead you can choose for your message, provided that your reader has some already established value associated with your product or service.

Most of the time, however, you are trying to sell at an established price. And most of the time you are writing to someone who wishes the price were less! For those two simple and obvious reasons, writers attempt to minimize the effect of price details. They do so by

- Introducing price after most of the sales points have been presented
- Stating price in terms of a unit ("50¢ a wrench" rather than "\$6 a dozen")
- Identifying the daily, monthly, or even yearly cost based on an estimated life of the product ("10¢ a night" for a good mattress sounds much easier to pay for than "\$79")
- Suggesting a series of payments rather than the total (an alumnus is more likely to contribute "\$10 a month for the next year" than he is to contribute "\$120 next year")
- Comparing the present price with the cost of some product or activity that the reader accepts readily. ("For the price of six cigarettes a day your child can have better schools" was the punch line of an ad promoting a school-bond drive. And an Episcopal bishop drove home his point with "This means 17¢ per week from each communicant—not a large sum for the Kingdom of God, when we realize that many of us spend twice that amount *every day* for tobacco." Likewise, a sales writer sells air-conditioned sleep for the price of a daily coke.)
- Associating the price with a reminder of the benefits to be gained

The first and the last of the suggestions you can always apply; the others as indicated by the following varying factors.

In general, the higher the income bracket of your audience, the less desirability for applying the techniques.

The higher the price of your product or service, the greater the desirability for minimizing price in one or more of these ways. The less familiar your audience is with your product or service, the greater the desirability that you justify price. Such devices are incorporated more frequently in consumer letters than in letters to dealers.

Often you will be able to omit direct price talk because a salesman will handle it in a face-to-face interview or because you need more information before determining price; sometimes you can shift the burden of price discussion to an enclosure. But when you are trying to close a sale, you must identify what it is going to cost your reader and help him justify the expenditure.

**Securing Action.** Having convinced your reader that your product or service is worth the price you are asking him to pay, you want him to take action before he changes his mind, before he forgets about the matter, before he spends the money for something else, before any of the things that could happen do happen.

A word of caution here, however: the bromidic, high-pressure, general expressions like "Act today!" "Do it now!" "Don't delay!" are more likely to produce reactions ranging from indifference to disgust than the favorable reaction you seek.

As in all persuasive letters, your good action ending

- Makes clear the specific action you want your reader to take
- Clears up any question about how the action is to be taken
- Makes the action easy (and sound as easy as possible)
- Supplies a stimulus to action, preferably immediate action

When your reader finishes your letter, he should know just exactly what it is you want him to do. He should not be in doubt for even a fraction of a second. In invited sales letters, you usually want him to send in an order or take some step in furthering the order, such as invite the visit of a salesman, make a visit to a demonstration or salesroom, or try out the product. The psychological urge is stronger if you name the explicit action rather than resort to the vague "Let us hear from you soon" or any of its equivalents. There will be times when you will have to name two actions and ask the reader to take one or the other; if you possibly can, avoid doing so, for the simple reason that some folks when faced with a choice resolve their dilemma by doing nothing.

Facilitating devices—order blanks, order cards, and postcards or envelopes already addressed and requiring no postage—remove some of the tediousness of taking action. References to them—preferably directing the reader to use them—reassure your reader that what you are asking him to do is simple, requiring little time or effort.

Moreover, through careful wording, you can further this impression. "Write us your choice" suggests more work than "Check your choice of colors on the enclosed card." "Jot down," "Just check," "Simply initial," are examples of wording that suggests ease and rapidity in doing something. Wording like this will help to reduce some of your reader's reluctance to take action.

The final suggestion for a good action ending—that of supplying a stimulus to action—is a matter of either threatening your reader or promising him something. Talk of limited supply, price rises after a certain date, introductory offers for a limited time, premiums, and the like is all very well *provided it is true* and *provided it is specific* so that the reader is likely to accept your statement as one accurately depicting the conditions. Otherwise, readers of even average intelligence and experience read such statements with some skepticism for two good reasons:

1. They have seen too many instances in which such statements were not true. They have also seen "introductory" offers repeated over and over and over.
2. Especially in the United States, talk of limited supply raises questions about the desirability of the article. "If it's so good and so popular, why aren't more of them made?" Why a premium? Is the product overpriced? Is there some drawback for which the premium is sop?

Records of mail-order experiences over the years have shown that such hurry-up devices do increase returns in some instances. Scarcities, for instance, during national-emergency periods certainly make a difference in a person's decision to buy. And the desire to save money before another round of inflation hits makes many a buyer reach for his checkbook. But such devices are not universally applicable and far less so in invited sales letters than in uninvited sales.

In many circumstances you have nothing you can use as a stimulus but the desirability of your product or service. You *always* have that, however. In the final analysis your reader bases his buying decision on what the product contributes to his life; when you ask him to part with his money, remind him again of what he will receive as a result. (This is called a "stimulus" or a "clincher." But since many sales writers refer to the four steps of the action ending as the "clincher," we think it's simpler just to call this restatement of benefit the "stimulus.")

Such a stimulus comes appropriately as the ending idea of your letter. Such placement has decided psychological value, too, for it emphasizes the service attitude—rather than the greed that would be stressed if you ended with dollars and cents talk or the mechanics of ordering.

Desirably, the stimulus is short—often only a phrase, at most a short sentence, restating the theme of the letter. The Stair-Traveller letter, for example, could have ended effectively with

Mr. J. B. Nickle, our Memphis representative, will be glad to call at a time convenient for you. If you'll fill out and mail the enclosed postcard, he will come to your home and explain how simply and economically your Stair-Traveller can *make your daily living more pleasurable.*

Another example of the built-in stimulus is this ending from a letter to a farmer about an automatic milking machine:

And for \$77.75—less than you pay for ten sacks of feed—Farm Master Milker can go to work for you. Just leave the enclosed card for the mail carrier tomorrow morning, and our Philadelphia representative will soon be up to give you a demonstration of how Farm Master Milker will *increase your dairy profits.*

For other examples, reread the endings of the Roanoke lamp letter and the letter selling the Lektrasweep.

A final reminder: Invited sales are sales letters in the realest sense; you should, therefore, apply all the points discussed in the section on Persuasion principles. The check list on pages 636–37 summarizes the most significant points to keep in mind for a good invited sales letter.

Letters like the invited sales you have read in this section do take time and therefore money—more than many firms can wisely spend.

Unless a firm has practically unlimited money and trained personnel, form messages need to be used some of the time for desirable speed and economy in handling inquiries with sales possibilities.

## FORM LETTERS

Forms decrease the cost of correspondence by cutting down on time for dictation, transcription, handling, and filing. The closer you can come to completely eliminating one or more of these steps, the more you can save. The big problem is to determine when you can save enough in costs to justify the loss in effectiveness.

Though most readers like the implied extra consideration of the individual letter, few business people will object to a form because it is a form. They will rightly object to a sloppy form or a form message which does not contain the necessary information. And some will object to a form which tries to masquerade as an individual letter but fails because of discrepancies in type, faulty alignment, or inept wording. But the undisguised form can successfully carry its message in many situations, especially those involving many similar inquiries to which you can reply somewhat like the following:

Here's Your Copy of  
"The Buying Guide  
to Fine Furniture."

You will be delighted with the wealth of information condensed into this conveniently indexed booklet.

For here, in a comparatively few pages, are guide-posts used by experts with a lifetime of experience in weighing true furniture values. Here are features which help such experts actually judge furniture "upside down" as well as right side up.

And here are features illustrated and described to guide you in your purchases of furniture so that the pieces you select to furnish your home will give you utmost pleasure as the years roll by.

We're glad you've given us this opportunity to send you this information. For we love fine furniture . . . take great pride in making it . . . and enjoy distributing information about it that may be helpful to you in establishing standards of value.

Even though every piece of furniture bearing the Langston seal is handcrafted to certified standards of quality, nation-wide popularity makes possible budget prices. For a pleasant surprise, see your dealer, whose name is imprinted on the back page of the booklet.

Even the signature of this letter is processed. When an inquiry comes in, the letter and booklet are inserted in an envelope addressed to the inquirer; addressing the envelope is the only time-consuming step. Thus a reply which could easily cost a dollar or more if individually handled runs to no more than a dime. And the firm gains extra good will by a prompt answer.

You can run off completely processed forms (strict forms) by the thousands at very low cost. The only additional expense is for addressing (of course, you have mailing expense and advertising expense in securing the inquiry; but these are the same whether your message is processed or individualized).

Thus *completely* processed messages are the cheapest. And they can be adapted in talking points and references even to a large mailing list. But completely processed letters have limitations. Personalizing is impossible. And if you process the body and then insert individual inside addresses and salutations, you have two additional problems: greatly increased costs and obvious discrepancies between the two types. Unless the firm sells only one product or has a different form for each product, resale talk on the goods can't be included, although it can be on the firm. Dates cannot be included (usually not important). Completely processed messages can, however, indicate the disposition of the inquiry (or order), express gratitude, convey some evidence of service attitude, and look forward to future business relations, as in the following postcard acknowledgment:

We are glad to give your recent order our immediate careful attention and to follow your shipping instructions exactly.

You may be sure we appreciate this opportunity to serve you and shall be happy to do so when you again decide to order Wolf's fine confections for yourself or as a gift.

Fill-ins enable you to be more specific than you can be in a strict form. For example, the strict form above could read like this as a fill-in (the filled-in parts being in parentheses):

(January 15, 19—)

A (2-lb. box of Wolf's famous Texas Chewie Pecan Pralines) was sent today, as you requested, by (parcel post).

Your candy was carefully packed and addressed to (Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Blanton, 2443 Hathaway Road, Syracuse, N.Y.). When it arrives within the next few days we know (they) will enjoy the rich, nutty flavor of this fine candy.

Many thanks for your order. When you want more of Wolf's fine candies for yourself or for pleasing a friend with an inexpensive gift distinctly different, we shall be glad to serve you again.

But even though you can do a good job of matching print and type in a fill-in like this, in almost all instances the irregular spacing calls attention to the fact that the message is a form fill-in. The first two insertions in the example above extend the line of type far beyond what any typist would do if this were individually typed. And see what happens when the recipient's name and address are something as short as "Mr. J. P. Ames, Opp, Iowa"! The line then would be much too short. That is one of the reasons why so many of these are filled in with pen and ink, with no attempt to disguise.

With proper planning, equipment, and patience, however, fill-ins can appear to be individual letters. The following is a good example, where the necessary insertions are the name of the city (at the end of a line, please note), the name of the dealer (displayed attractively with additional spacing all around), and the reader's name (again, at the end of the line and with enough space to allow for a "Miss Rives" or a "Miss Getzendannerich"). A full inside address and date line are also used.

DEAR MISS RIVES:

The enclosed literature describes several Phenix models which we believe will be of interest to you. Although the literature illustrates and describes the instruments, you cannot fully appreciate the beauty of the cabinetry or their magnificent tone without seeing and hearing them.

Phenix instruments are designed for discriminating buyers—for those who have genuine appreciation for refined furniture styling and

truly fine musical tone—and they are sold only through high-grade music dealers and selected quality department stores.

We urge you to see these instruments and have them demonstrated to you. You will be thrilled by the perfection of tone that has been attained by Phenix.

Our instruments are on display in Austin at  
The J. P. Read Music Company  
855 Congress Avenue.

This dealer will be delighted to have the privilege of demonstrating Phenix instruments to you without any obligation whatever, Miss Rives.

Plan to go by for a demonstration.

Sincerely yours

For greatest economy, the preceding letter would be printed; then, when an inquiry comes in *that this form would be a satisfactory answer for*, a typist would need only to type in the date, the inside address, the salutation, and the city, dealer's name, and reader's name in the body of the letter—a matter of two or three minutes. Addressing and stamping (or metering) the envelope would take another two or three.

But because type is hard to match and exact alignment is difficult to make, some firms use an automatic typewriter (also called "robot") for multiple correspondence like this. After the contents of the letter have been decided on, the secretary cuts a kind of stencil of the pattern to guide the automatic typewriter. She inserts paper, types the necessary date, inside address, and salutation, then presses a button, and the machine takes over the typing job. When it comes to the necessary individualized parts, the machine stops, and the secretary types in whatever is necessary. The economy over straight manual typing would not be great if only one such machine were used; most companies, however, have a secretary running at least two at one time, and some have one operator running five at one time! When you consider that these machines produce copy at about twice the speed of the fastest typist and that one typist can easily take the place of three, you can easily see what economies are made.

This economy measure can be applied to form paragraphs as well as to whole letters. The procedure is to write an excellent paragraph covering each frequently recurring point in the firm's correspondence and assign it a code number. These paragraphs are then carefully classified. Some of the classifications may be by type of letter in which the paragraphs are used. For instance, most of the collection man's paragraphs would be useless to the man acknowledging orders, and vice versa. Usually there is a list of standard beginnings and endings. Half-a-dozen ending paragraphs and a dozen beginnings will cover

most of the situations. Other paragraphs will be about the various products of the company. Each company correspondent and each typist then gets a book of the coded paragraphs, which may be typed manually or made into record rolls for use on an electric typewriter.

When the letter writer starts to dictate, he may write a letter simply as 13, 27, 16, 42. That would mean a four-paragraph letter made up of those standard paragraphs in that order. If he finds no ready-made paragraph for what he wants to say in the second paragraph, he dictates 13, special, 16, 42, and follows with the wording for his special second paragraph. If the same point comes up frequently enough, a good paragraph should be prepared for it and put into the correspondent's book.

Because the paragraphs are used over and over, they are carefully prepared and are therefore better than most correspondents would write quickly under the pressure of dictation. Obviously, the same advantage applies to an entire form letter.

And simple arithmetic shows you that even if you spend thirty to fifty hours on one letter, when you send it to a thousand people, dictation time and transcription time are only a fraction of the time that individual letters would require. In a nutshell that is the whole theory back of form letters. They have to be used to cut correspondence costs, to reduce the burdensome human aspects of the ever-increasing correspondence problems of management, and to expedite replies to people who want and expect information as quickly as they can get it.

Certain dangers exist, however. The greatest is the tendency to use a form when it simply does not apply. When a person writes in asking if Pepperdent has chlorophyll in it, he does not want the answer that "Pepperdent will make your smile brighter because of its new secret ingredient urium! Leading stars of stage and screen praise its refreshing cleansing effectiveness"—all of which may be true but has nothing to do with the inquiry. If the form does not supply the necessary information, consider adding it in a postscript position; many good firms do. If you cannot add it to an existing form, write an individual letter.

Another danger is in broadcasting that the message is a form with such references as:

To all our customers:

Whether you live in Maine or California. . . .

In a broadside (circular) such mass impersonality may be necessary. But in a letter the personal touch pays off. And remember that in every test ever made, the form letter that makes no pretense of being anything else (like the furniture letter on p. 161) results in more

returns than the imperfectly disguised form, whether the slipup is due to poor mechanics or inept wording.

One objection to forms is that there is a danger of customers' receiving the same letter more than once. If it does the job, what is the objection? Furthermore, an efficient system where all form messages have code numbers will certainly have some means of recording on the customer's records the symbols of all messages which that customer has received.

Still another danger is in the use of form paragraphs. Unless the paragraphs are all prepared by the same person, stylistic differences will be apparent to some readers. Unless the writers of the paragraphs are careful, they make them too polished to sound natural in a letter; and, even though the paragraphs pass on those two counts, if a poor writer has to write one special to go along with four of the good ones from the correspondence manual, his special may stand out like the proverbial sore thumb.

But form messages can and should be used to help you do a correspondence job that would otherwise prove excessively burdensome.

The question of whether to use a form or not depends on the amount of time and money you have, the recurring nature of the problem, the degree of expediency necessitated—but, most of all, on your own good judgment of whether it will do the particular job.

The suggestions made about form letters in this chapter should be applied to any repetitive letter situation, whether it is one involving replies to inquiries, acknowledgments of orders, sales, credit, collections, or adjustments. Whether a letter is a form or an individualized letter is not the significant consideration; whether a letter does all it can do to cement good will and build sales is what counts. So, except for occasional incidental references pointing out the ease or wisdom of form treatment in a particular situation, the remainder of this book is devoted to individualized, personalized letters because

1. You can learn more about letter principles and their application that way.
2. As a result of such specific study and practice, you will write much better form letters when you have to.
3. In most circumstances calling for a letter, a personal letter will do a more effective job for you than a form.

## ORDERS

Since sellers by mail usually provide well-designed order blanks and addressed envelopes with their catalogues, the only problems connected with writing an order appear when you do not have the blanks and must write a letter.

An order is probably the easiest kind of letter to write. You have no problem of getting attention or interest, and no conviction or persuasion is necessary in this A-plan letter. The reader is in business to sell goods. If you write clearly enough to let him know what you want and make satisfactory plans to pay for it, you'll get an answer. A poor order letter may, however, cause the reader some trouble and bring results a little different from what you really want.

As a considerate and efficient letter writer, you should write orders that will be easy for a clerk to fill and that will bring you just what you want. The basic requirements, as you can see from almost any order blank, are five:

1. Make them orders, not just hints. The acceptance of a definite offer to sell or an offer to buy is contractual. The usual beginning for an order is "Please send me. . . ."
2. Describe the goods completely. Though the catalogue number alone usually identifies adequately except for color and size, give four or five clean-cut columns of information, preferably in this sequence: (1) quantity desired; (2) catalogue number, if any; (3) name of product and as many details as are appropriate of model, color, size, material, grade or quality, pattern, finish, monogram initials; (4) unit price (sometimes not given as a separate column); (5) total price for the designated quantity of the item.

In the absence of a catalogue, your information will likely go into two or three columns: quantity, name and description, and perhaps estimated total price. To supplement the inexact information, then, you may need to explain more fully by telling how the product is to be used, and in some cases by sending exact drawings.

3. Write a separate, single-spaced paragraph for each item, with double spacing between paragraphs.
4. Make clear how you expect to pay. If you have not established credit but want goods charged, you should provide credit information with the order (see pp. 145-46).

If you want neither credit nor C.O.D. shipment (which costs you more), several methods of remitting are open to you: personal check, money orders (postal, express, or telegraph), certified or cashier's check, or bank draft.

Regardless of how you remit, you should refer to the remittance in the letter and tell its form, amount, and intended application.

5. Be sure the *where*, *when*, and *how* of shipment are clear.

The following typical order letter illustrates the five points.

Please send me the following items listed in your current spring and summer catalogue:

|   |            |                                                                                      |                |
|---|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 60 C 6587L | Glass casting rod, Model 162, extra light action, 5 ft. 8 in. ....                   | \$ 8.95        |
| 1 | 60 CP 6302 | Pflueger Summit reel, Model 1993L ....                                               | 13.75          |
| 2 | 60 C 6846  | Cortland "Cam-o-flage" nylon casting line, 10-lb. test, 100-yd. lengths @ 2.30 ..... | 4.60           |
|   |            | Total                                                                                | <u>\$27.30</u> |

The enclosed check for \$28 covers the price, sales tax, and parcel post charges.

As I plan to go fishing a week from next Saturday (June 26), I will want the equipment by that time.

The following letter did a much more difficult job of ordering. Test it against the five requirements set up for a good order letter. Note how the writer made very clear just what he wanted without benefit of a catalogue or parts list to give him the code numbers and prices of the items.

Please send me the following parts for Little Giant Shallow Well Water System P4/12818. Since I have no catalogue, I am describing each part carefully.

- 1 Valve rubber, 1 1/4 inches in diameter with 5/16 inch hole. It is one of four that work under springs on the valve plate.
- 1 Crank pin. Apparently this is a steel pin of highly special design. Its threaded end, 7/16 inch in diameter and 11/16 inch long, screws into the eccentric arm on the end of the drive shaft so that the rest of the pin forms the crankshaft. That is, the big end of the connecting rod fits around it. (See drawings on the attached sheet.) The crank-shaft part of this pin is an eccentric 1/2 inch in diameter and 11/16 inch long.
- 1 Connecting rod, as drawn on the attached sheet. Apparently it is brass or bronze. Please note the specifications as to size of hole. For other models, I know that the sizes are a little different.

I estimate that these parts will cost approximately \$4. I am enclosing my check for \$5 to cover all charges, including tax and parcel post. You can send me your regular refund check if the charges are less or send C.O.D. for the difference if they are more.

I'll appreciate your trying to fill the order promptly. My pump, much needed these days, is about to quit on me.

### STANDARD ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Poorly written orders cost their buyer-writers much delay in getting the desired goods, and they cost sellers lots of headaches and money (spent on letters required to get the needed information). But poor acknowledgments, for which the sellers are wholly responsible, cost them much more—in loss of good will and customers.

The acknowledgment letter should be an effective means of increasing good will and promoting business. A man who orders from you evidently has a favorable attitude toward your firm and its goods or he wouldn't be ordering. That is a healthful climate for business. Your job in acknowledging his order is to keep it that way by giving him satisfaction.

He expects to get what he ordered, to get it promptly, and to have his business appreciated. If not, he expects a prompt and reasonable explanation. To give him less is to make a customer for somebody else.

Frequently a businessman who handles a large volume of orders, however, comes to look upon them as routine matters and to write his answers accordingly. In so doing, he forgets three things: (1) the individual customer usually sends comparatively few orders, and they are not routine to him at all; (2) a routine acknowledgment of them strikes him as indifference; and (3) indifference, according to a U.S. Department of Commerce survey, is responsible for at least 67 per cent of lost customers.

There may be justifying reasons (rationing, strikes, impossibility of always estimating demand accurately, as well as incomplete orders from the buyer) why a businessman cannot fill some orders promptly, or at all. But there is no reason why he cannot acknowledge those orders promptly, as the following postcard reply from a large department store does.

DEAR CUSTOMER:

Thank you for your letter concerning *a ladder*.

It is receiving our attention, and you will receive a reply to it as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Obviously, a form postcard cannot do all that a letter can, but it can reflect a service attitude and thus help to retain good will. Least of all is there excuse for not showing appreciation for orders. (Italicized words are the fill-in-typed if you can, penned if you're swamped!)

As you requested, the *turntable for Scrabble has been sent to Mrs. M. W. Colby.*

Thank you for calling on us. We hope that you have found our service convenient and that you will write to us often.

There is scarcely any excuse, either, for the seller who does not do more than the minimum that the customer ordinarily expects. A good businessman makes even a small first order an opportunity to cement a lasting business relationship.

The most important acknowledgment is the standard—acknowledging an order you can fill immediately. It is an easy letter to write.

Clearly, the standard acknowledgment is a good-news letter. The beginning should be a direct answer to the biggest question in the reader's mind—what you are doing about his order. To perform its legal function, the standard acknowledgment must identify and accept the order. Thus it completes a contract. The identification is by date and one or more of order number, exact relisting, or sometimes merely a general naming of the class of goods. Certainly, when the list is long or the value great, the goods should be listed on an attached invoice and the invoice referred to in the letter.

To perform its business function, the standard acknowledgment must clear up the financial arrangements and tell when, where, and how you are sending the goods. The approximate arrival date is also desirable, not only as a convenience to the customer but as a basis for the psychologically favorable effect of his visualizing himself actually receiving and using the goods. On small orders to customers who have established credit or sent the exact amount with the order, the financial arrangements are frequently omitted because they are already clear.

If you are acknowledging the first order from a new customer, the acknowledgment will certainly include a hearty welcome and will stress resale and the forward look even more than a letter to an old customer. The welcome is sometimes interwoven or implied in what you are doing about the order; but ordinarily it comes later, frequently combined with an expression of appreciation.

Whether new or old, the customer will probably like you better for expressing appreciation, perhaps even interwoven in the first paragraph. In most cases, however, you can demonstrate gratitude more effectively with statements of how you've handled the order, resale talk, and offers to be of service again.

The middle section of the standard acknowledgment is devoted to

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the financial details not already completed, any resale talk of more than phrase length, and explicit evidence of service attitude.

Encouragement to future ordering in a success-conscious forward look to the future is the almost invariable ending for the standard acknowledgment.

Such an acknowledgment is easy to write. Here's an example of how the parts are all put together for an effective personalized acknowledgment covering all points specifically:

You should receive your eight cases of Tuff Paper towels in time for Friday afternoon shoppers; they were sent by prepaid express this morning.

The 27¢ voucher attached to this letter is your change after we deducted \$9.20 charges and 53¢ express from your \$10 check.

Thank you for your order. I believe this is our first shipment of paper products to you. We're glad that we can serve you in this way.

You'll find that these Tuff Papers have a fast turnover, Mr. Ford, because housewives like the way they soak up grease, dust off spots, and save cloth towels from many dirty jobs. And you'll like their attractive small packaging that takes up a minimum of display and shelf space. Your mark-up figures out at exactly 29%.

For more information about Tuff Paper dish rags and window washers, colorful shelf paper that your customers will like for their pantries, and other paper products that every household needs, look in the enclosed booklet. Notice that each article carries the usual Tuff Paper margin of profit.

Perhaps you'd like to take advantage of our regular terms of 2/10, n/60 on future orders. If so, we'll be glad to consider your credit application when you fill in and return the enclosed form. And when you order, if you want window and shelf displays to help you sell, just say so. Then watch Tuff Paper kitchen paper products bring Altoona women into your store for frequent repeat sales.

The trouble with this kind of acknowledgment is that it costs at least a dollar, possibly two. To be specific on all points, to adapt the message to an individual, and to make it persuasive require an average-length, individually dictated letter. But when the prospect of numerous future orders depends on the letter, the businessman would be foolish to do less. In some situations enough is involved to make him willing to spend even more to produce the most effective letter he can, rather than risk an unfavorable reaction on the part of the customer.

The inability to recognize situations that deserve full treatment and the general inclination to save even a little time and money on correspondence frequently lead to trouble. Pinching pennies by dashing off personalized letters that are just a little too short to be ade-

quate is poor economy. The result is comparable to throwing out *almost* enough rope to reach a drowning man. If you are going to write a personalized letter, make it a good one. Its cost does not increase in proportion to length. A question you should always answer before cheapening your correspondence is whether you lose more in results, including good will, than you save on costs. (See p. 640.)

But there are many cases in which a form card or letter serves admirably as an acknowledgment, as we talked about and illustrated in the discussion, "Form Letters" (p. 160). The preceding Tuff Paper letter could be handled in a form message like this one (which, incidentally, *could* serve for acknowledging a repeat order):

You should receive the Tuff Paper products you ordered in just a few days; they are already on the way.

Thank you for your order. We are glad that we can serve you in this way.

You'll find that Tuff Paper products have a fast turnover; housewives like the way they can be used for many messy household cleaning jobs and then be disposed of quickly and easily.

You will like their attractive packaging that takes up a minimum of shelf and display space. And the sizable markup!

Read the enclosed booklet for more information about Tuff Paper dish rags, window washers, colorful shelf paper, and other paper products that every household needs.

Use the handy order blank and business-reply envelope in the back of the booklet when you want to order the additional Tuff Paper products that your customers will be asking for.

(Signature)

(Postscript position could handle special material.)

If the situation is one in which specificity would add to the effectiveness of an acknowledgment, a fill-in rather than a strict form should be used. The letter writer will have to weigh the relative advantages and costs. Fill-ins can serve to make the essential information of the acknowledgment more specific, enhance the service attitude, and provide specific resale talk.

The use of forms in acknowledgments to customers whose orders you can fill may be summarized as follows:

1. Nothing else can quite replace the personalized letter for special, important business requiring full details, specific treatment, persuasion, adaptation, and evidence of personal attention.
2. But even very inexpensive forms (strict forms and fill-ins) may do the job adequately on numerous small orders where profits are low, where an obvious form will be excused, where not all kinds

of acknowledgment content are required, and where generalities may suffice.

3. The more expensive forms are still much less expensive than personalized letters; and, in the hands of a skillful user, they have most of the advantages of the individually dictated letter, including the important point of *seeming* like one to each reader as he reads his copy.
4. The man writing acknowledgments should study his situation and make the wise choice of (1) whether to use forms and (2), if so, which kind. He can be foolish either way. Economy dictates that he choose the cheapest that will do the job; but probably the poorest economy of all is to send a form when the situation justifies a carefully prepared personal letter.

Fortunately, most standard acknowledgments are not difficult letter-writing problems. Forms can and should do most of the work.

## CREDIT APPROVALS

In Latin *credo* means "I believe." Woven firmly into the meaning of the English word *credit* are the basic ideas of trust, faith, honor, integrity. Hence in naming what is commonly called the three C's of credit, credit men name character first, followed by capacity and capital (some credit men add a fourth C, conditions).

*Character* is honesty. It is one's good word. In business it is living up to the spirit as well as the letter of the contract. And, creditwise, it is meeting obligations as one promises to do.

*Capacity* is the ability to produce or to earn and thus furnish the means for payment. For a business firm it is the present or potential profit from a business operation such as manufacturing or marketing; for an individual it is usually wages, salary, fees, or commissions.

*Capital* is the money behind the debtor. It may be cash, of course; but it is also other assets in the form of land, buildings, securities, patents, copyrights, to mention the more common forms. It could, as a last resort, furnish the money for payment in the event of reversals.

*Conditions*, as used by some credit men, has two interpretations. On the one hand, they mean general business trends. On the other hand, they mean special or local conditions or the trends of the debtor's business as shown in his comparative financial statements.

Because all these four C's—especially the first two—are reflections of personal qualities of an individual, credit letters are surcharged with negative possibilities. When you call into question a man's honesty, earning ability, or judgment, you are treading on potentially dangerous ground. And, since the credit department, of necessity, has frequent contact with the customers of the firm, the chances of unintentionally offending increase. Certainly, credit letters can be one of a firm's greatest means of killing off the good will which the sales,

advertising, and even adjustment departments work to build up. With tact, patience, and a positive attitude, however, your credit letters can be good-will builders.

One of the fundamental concepts that will help you to write successful letters about credit is this: The credit privilege is *earned*; it is not handed out indiscriminately, given away—or sold. For that reason your letters should not talk about *granting* credit; more appropriate terminology is *approval* or *extension* of credit.

On one or more of the four C's an individual or firm merits credit. For many people, character is the primary reason they enjoy credit. They earn little, and they have little or no capital; but they pay their bills and thus earn the right to credit. And this is the bedrock of credit extension. Firms or individuals may enjoy high earnings but will not continue to enjoy ordinary credit privileges with a record of not taking care of obligations as promised (though they will be accorded more leniency by most firms than the debtor of low earning power). Most customers in a good capital position usually can also be rated high on both capacity and character. Certainly, this statement is true with respect to business firms (they are usually the *discounters*). An occasional individual in favorable capital position may have no earning power and may let bills accumulate, but he does not continue in such lackadaisical fashion very long; the axe inevitably falls.

Anticipating those who may be unable or unwilling to pay is one of the primary functions of the credit manager. He evaluates credit applicants' credit records and estimates their financial stability in the light of general business ups and downs. He does the same for customers already on the books. Periodically, he reviews accounts (and for business firms the financial statements) for danger signals. He must be on his toes to hold down losses from bad debts.

But if he approves only gilt-edged accounts, he will seriously curtail sales. His job is to contribute to the profits of his firm, not just to conserve them. Accordingly, he must be sales-minded. He needs to be well informed about the firm's goods as a means of making his letters build customer confidence and increase sales. But even more significant, he must realize that marginal risks are vital for profitable operations and that he must give a great part of his time to evaluating and encouraging borderline cases. For his firm and his customers, he is part counselor, part salesman, and part detective. To play these many roles, he must keep well informed.

An efficient credit man need not want for information about his customers. He has many sources available to him.

The customer himself is a source. Most Americans are fairly well credit-educated and expect to give evidence of credit responsibility. A consumer applying for credit with a retail outlet is usually willing to supply information about his means of livelihood, names of firms

with which he has done business on credit, the name of his bank, whether he owns real estate, and his approximate annual income. Most business firms, in seeking credit, furnish financial statements and references, many of them unsolicited (and they keep right on furnishing those statements year after year). If for any reason the customer does not furnish all the information desired—or if you want to verify what the customer has stated—you have several reliable ways of finding out.

Other business firms with which the applicant has done credit business expect to furnish details of their experience when asked. Banks supply information about both individuals and businesses. Local and national credit bureaus (such as the National Retail Credit Men's Association and the National Association of Credit Men) maintain files on concerns and individuals with whom their members have done credit business, which information is available to all members. Credit-rating agencies (like Dun & Bradstreet) publish volumes containing credit reports on business firms; if a firm isn't listed and you are a subscriber to their service, they will furnish a special report if you request it. Your salesmen can help to fill in the picture. And a trade association in many instances can give you pertinent information.

When the information you receive is favorable, you will, of course, approve the application and set up the account.

Certainly the extension of credit calls for a good-news A-plan message! The customer is pleased at the confirmation of his good standing and at the prospect of being served by a good business firm. And the members of the firm are happy to add another good name to the list of customers.

The one invariable essential function of such a message is that it must confirm the new credit relationship. Though some credit approvals are oral, and in the case of firms of national repute and sound capital structure a credit-approving letter is not written because the credit standing of the firm is assumed, in most cases some written message notifies the customer.

Because of the sheer weight of numbers, most credit approvals are form messages, especially when no purchase (and shipment) of goods is involved. Many stores do no more than send a printed announcement card like the following:

THE J. P. BOWEN COMPANY

Is pleased to open a charge  
account for you and welcome you to  
our family of regular patrons

We hope you will make regular use  
of your charge account

Such a notification sent promptly is certainly better than nothing. Yet it falls far short of what a good credit letter can do to strengthen the credit relationship and stimulate sales.

**Explanation of Terms.** Unless a firm wants to encourage delayed payments, the initial extension of credit should make unmistakably clear how payments are expected, with the confident assumption that the customer will comply with the terms. Even a form card or letter can easily incorporate a simple statement like one of the following:

On the first of each month you will receive an itemized statement of your purchases made through the 25th day of the preceding month; purchases made after the 25th appear on the following month's bill. Your payment is expected by the 10th.



Under our system of cycle billing your statement of a month's purchases will be mailed to you on the 17th of each month; settlement is expected within ten days.

(Under cycle billing, bills are prepared and mailed at various intervals throughout the month: names beginning with *A*, on the 1st; with *B*, on the 2d; with *M*, on the 16-17th; etc. It is a simple matter to match names and dates in form mailings.)

In special letters the clear, specific explanation of the terms not only can prevent misunderstanding and delay but can also serve as a stimulus for prompt pay:

Under our regular credit terms of 2/10, n/30, you can save \$1.36 on this order alone if your check is in the mail by July 10—which will almost pay for another enamel display tray. Your check for the net of \$68 by July 30, however, will keep you in the preferred-customer class.

Such specificity is not possible, of course, except in an individually written letter or special paragraph. But the credit extension, whenever possible, should be an individual letter; it is worth the extra money in its salutary effect on the customer.

**Establishing the Basis for Credit.** In credit approvals you may, as an effective credit device, take advantage of the simple, obvious psychology of praise or approval. Most people, when reminded of what makes them desirable or attractive, will work to keep that characteristic as good as it is or to improve it. If a customer is placed on the credit list because of a prompt-pay rating, he should be told so; having been told, he is more likely to strive to maintain that rating. The same is true for some reflections of favorable capacity or capital positions. The reference should not be lengthy; in fact, it is preferably absorbed subordinately in the extension of credit or the explanation of terms. It is a significant reminder to the customer that credit is an earned privilege for which care, thought, and effort must be

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exerted if it is to be maintained. Too, thus established, it may serve as an effective collection appeal to the customer if the account begins to get slow.

So forceful is this device in the opinion of one experienced credit manager we know that his letters to credit applicants with prompt-pay records is only one sentence:

We have received from your references the reports of your fine pay habits and shall be very happy to have a regular monthly charge account with you.

Obviously, this letter should accomplish more than it does. But it is a good example of the significance of the credit basis.

Here are two other examples of how you can establish the basis:

Your excellent credit record in Joplin establishes you as a preferred charge customer at Allen Tilby's. And we hope that from now on the charge identification plate enclosed will make available to you a wealth of quality merchandise gathered from the four corners of the world.

~~~~~  
Because of your good credit standing, earned by your personal honesty and the sizable amount of property you own, we have placed your name on our list of regular credit customers.

Form letters can—and do—through careful wording, employ the strategy; the one-sentence letter to prompt-pay accounts is a good example. It is entirely possible to phrase the credit extension and the basis in broad enough fashion to cover a large number of cases.

To stop with the approval, the basis, and the terms would be foolish, however; a good credit man can also help to further sales—through resale material on goods, resale on the house, or sales-promotional material on other allied goods. All should focus on repeat sales.

**Stimulating Sales.** In credit approvals, sales-building passages should definitely be low-pressure; if the service attitude does not dominate, the greedy overtones can repel the reader. But the writer of the following letter, you will note, is careful to tie in a service-to-you reference to all his sales-building passages and thus make the customer feel welcome rather than pounced upon:

Your excellent credit record in Joplin establishes you as a preferred charge customer at Allen Tilby's.

And we hope that from now on the charge identification plate enclosed will make available to you a wealth of quality merchandise gathered from the four corners of the world.

On the first of each month you will receive an itemized statement of your purchases made through the 25th day of the preceding month;

purchases made after the 25th appear on the following month's bill. You'll be prompt in paying your account on time, we know, for our terms—payment in full by the 10th—are the same as the terms of the stores with which you've been trading in Joplin.

You'll find that our merchandise is just as close as your telephone when you haven't time for shopping. Ask for Paula Penn, our Personal Shopper, who will be glad to assist you. We'll have your purchases at your door by 5 o'clock if your order is made no later than noon.

When you come down to Allen Tilby's, you'll find hundreds of sales personnel eager to help you find exactly the things you want. For all-day shopping or just for a delightful downtown luncheon you may enjoy the delightful Oval Room on the eighth floor. The spacious parking lot just across the street is available to you when you shop at Allen Tilby's.

Since you have just moved to a new home, you may be especially interested in the Home Furnishings Sale, which will extend through next week. Whatever you need, won't you come in soon and let us serve you?

The same considerations enable you to write good credit approvals to dealers. Two minor differences exist in circumstances (but not as far as writing principles are concerned): One is terms (discounts, datings, and number of days allowed); the other is the identification of the credit limit. Few letters to consumers ever identify a limit (though one may be entered on a credit application); most mercantile credit arrangements include limits as part of the explanation of terms. To prevent—as much as possible—the limit from appearing to be a penalty, with consequent negative reactions by the customer, a good writer phrases it in positive language, as in the following:

The No-Flame you ordered

20 gallons @ \$3.00 ..... \$60.00

was shipped to you freight prepaid this morning by the L & M Railroad; it should arrive in Jackson by the week end. The amount of this shipment has been debited to your newly opened account, which we are glad to open on the basis of your strong personal capital.

Under our regular terms of 2/10, n/60, your No-Flame will cost you only \$58.80 if you send your check by May 2; the full \$60 is due June 21. In any one 60-day period you may purchase as much as \$250 worth of No-Flame or other Bronson products.

With the increasing demand for No-Flame you will find it a rapid seller—and a good profit item at the usual markup of \$2 a can. With your shipment you will receive attractive window displays which our other dealers have found helpful.

Silentol, a flame-resistant, sound-decreasing plaster, is another item your home-building customers will like. The cost is only a fraction more than for conventional plaster. For a trial shipment, just fill out the enclosed order blank and drop it in the mail; we'll send your Silentol to you—along with display material—within a few days.

***Making the Customer Welcome.*** Much is said and written in credit circles about making the customer feel appreciated. Indeed, the opening welcoming the customer to the "growing number of satisfied customers" or to the "XX&Y family" is standard with so many credit writers that it is stereotyped. The customer is more interested in finding out the answer to his application than he is in such welcomes or in any of the writer's personal (especially if selfish) expressions of happiness at adding another name to his list. If you approve the credit (and ship the goods when the application accompanies an order), establish the basis, explain the terms positively, then follow with resale and sales-promotional material concretely implying the desire to be of service, your reader will not be in doubt over whether you're glad to have his business. By implication, such welcomes and thank-yous are adequately established.

If, despite these suggestions and illustrations, you feel the necessity for either of these expressions, place it at the end of your letter.

The appended check list (pp. 638-39) summarizes our major suggestions about credit approvals, though, as always, they should be applied with discretion. We *know* they don't apply in all cases.

## SIMPLE CLAIMS AND ADJUSTMENT APPROVALS

Claims offer you as a buyer the opportunity to get adjustments on unsatisfactory goods and services you have bought. If you are a seller and therefore the receiver of claims, you welcome them! They offer you an opportunity to discover and analyze defects in your goods and services as a basis for correcting them. And your adjustment letters are excellent opportunities for you to build or destroy good will. Whether you make the most of your opportunities in either claims or adjustments depends heavily on your attitude.

Any claim and adjustment situation necessarily involves negatives. Somebody is dissatisfied and unhappy. One of the major jobs in writing either claim or adjustment letters is to keep these emotionally based negatives from stealing the show and making the situation worse. What you have learned about good will, resale, and handling of negative material is especially important in adjustment letters.

### Direct Claims

You will probably write good claim letters if you remember these often-forgotten points and learn what to do about them:

1. *Progressive firms like, instead of dislike, claims because they suggest ways to improvement. So if you think you have a just claim, go ahead.*

Many firms even advertise the request: "If you like our products, tell others; if you don't, tell us." Often they encourage claims by "double-your-money-back" guarantees and the like. For example, one manufacturer of lingerie made such an offer in full-page advertisements in national magazines. The conditions were that the products be worn, washed, and returned with an explanation of any dissatisfaction. The company hoped to get some constructive criticism whereby it could improve its products.

2. *When things go wrong, the firm surely did not intend to mis-treat the customer. Almost certainly, the reader of the claim letter had nothing to do with the dissatisfaction. So keep your shirt on!*

Very few manufacturers expect every item they manufacture to be perfect. They know that, even after careful checking, some defects may sometimes show up. Nearly always, they expect to replace or repair defective merchandise which is returned. This is a more efficient system than to insist on perfection in manufacturing and consequently higher prices. The consumer who gets defective merchandise and takes the attitude that the seller tried to take advantage of him, then, is usually wrong in his attitude. In most cases, to get satisfaction all he has to do is to make a simple claim such as the following:

When the set of Syracuse dinner dishes I ordered from you on November 1 arrived the day before Thanksgiving, I found that one of the coffee cups was cracked and one of the dinner plates had a defective design.

The excelsior around the cup was thin—evidently too thin to protect the cup from jars in transit.

I am returning the two imperfect pieces by express. Will you please replace them to complete my set?

Even though a product is defective, almost certainly the fellow who reads your claim letter had nothing to do with it. He probably didn't make it, check it, or sell it to you. To be nasty to him is to be quite unfair, unreasonable, even foolish. Instead of putting him in a favorable mood so that he will be inclined to help you get satisfaction, you turn this possible ally against you if you write a nasty letter.

3. *When you know just what is wrong and what is required to set things right, you should make a definite claim; otherwise, explain and ask for an inspection.*

Sometimes you can be sure that the only fair adjustment is a refund of your money or a complete replacement of the product. On

other occasions you can see that replacement of a part or proper adjustment of a machine will correct the trouble. You therefore ask definitely for what is necessary to make things right, as in the letter on page 179.

Sometimes, however, the product just isn't right, but you don't know exactly what is wrong. Your claim then should be an explanation of how the product is failing to satisfy you and a request for the necessary action. You can make your own estimate and request that action (as in the illustration on p. 249), call in third parties to estimate (as on automobile insurance claims, like that on p. 182-83), or ask the firm to investigate and take the indicated action. Here are two examples:

I think you will be interested in my experience with XXX outside white house paint used on my house this past summer.

A union painter applied three coats according to directions on the can. About three months later black streaks began to appear where water runs from the eaves and valleys.

At first I thought that the discoloration was from the green roof paint or the stain of the cedar shingles, but the same thing appears on the garage, which has an unpainted tin roof.

Various theories have been advanced concerning the smutty streaks. Some friends have suggested mildew, but my common sense says no. Some have suggested dirt, but it will not wash off. A chemist friend says that there is a lot of sulfur in the atmosphere here and that it may combine with the lead of the paint to make a sulfur-lead compound that is a smoky color.

So you see that I don't know what the cause is. But if your paint didn't hold its color, I'm sure that you are interested in knowing why. And I feel sure that if you find your product at fault, you will want to grant me an adjustment.

Will you please investigate and let me know your decision?



The DEXTER fluorescent desk lamp I purchased at your store October 5 has been satisfactory in every way but one.

When in use, the lamp operates coolly and soundlessly; but as soon as the lamp is switched off, something inside produces a humming sound. Not only is the hum annoying, but I fear that it suggests a fire hazard.

I'm returning the lamp to you for repair or replacement, whichever you find necessary.

Since I've lots of reading to do, will you please rush it back to me?

**4. Sometimes a touch of humor can relieve the pressure in small claims.**

Somewhat like the nasty tone (Point 2), another common error in writing claim letters is the writer's becoming deadly serious about small matters. A claim for replacement of a defective \$3 item makes the writer look silly when written as if it were a matter of life and death. If the situation is really serious, of course you would not want to treat it lightly. But to avoid the too-serious tone in small matters and make the reader an ally instead of a sneering critic, you can often use humor effectively. You may inject only a touch or two in the letter, or the whole thing may be humorous.

Several dangers confront you if you decide to be humorous: (1) A failing attempt to be funny is worse than no attempt. (2) Humor may make you write a longer letter than necessary. (3) Humor at the reader's expense will nearly always be resented. (4) Humor which verges on the vulgar or sacrilegious may offend.

The following successful letter, which was wrapped around the returned fountain pen, avoids at least the last two dangers.

GENTLEMEN: ATTENTION THE DOCTOR OF THE PEN HOSPITAL.

This faithful old "lifetime" has served me well through ten years. But now, like an old man, or an old horse, it needs rejuvenation—perhaps monkey glands.

Here's my diagnosis:

1. The threads are stripped, causing the barrel and cap to part company in my pocket. You know what that means!
2. At times gobs of ink come out.
3. Even though I like a point a little finer and more flexible than this one ever was, it seems to be getting blunter and stiffer.

I know what your lifetime guarantee is; so I'm looking forward to receiving a rejuvenated pen ready for ten more years of service.

Usually a firm will grant an adjustment merely on the strength of a customer's explanation of what is wrong and what he considers a fair settlement. In that case, you would make yourself ridiculous by misjudging the situation and writing a too-strong claim. Unless you have good reason to believe otherwise, you should therefore assume that the firm will be co-operative. Your letter should simply explain the specific facts and state your claim. Little or no persuasion is presumed to be necessary; hence you use no appeal beyond brief reference to a guarantee, reputation for fair dealing, and the like.

This kind of direct claim (A-plan) may start with the requested action, or it may start with the date and conditions of purchase. Beginning with the history of the case is a little less antagonizing and a little more persuasive. The middle part is a carefully planned, complete, and specific explanation of the facts. A test of the adequacy of the explanation is to ask whether it is all you would want to know

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if you had to decide on the claim. The ending, then, is a request for action. It should be as specific as the conditions will permit (Point 3, p. 179). Here are two examples:

I'm sure you will want to know that the Etherwave console model radio I purchased from you on June 5 is not giving the desired performance.

I was well pleased for the first two weeks, but now I am getting some interference and the tuning knob seems to slip. At least turning it does not change the tuning after the machine is warmed up.

Since I know very little about a radio, I asked a friend to look it over. He thinks that the condenser plates are somewhat loose and have shaken out of tram and a small belt in the tuning mechanism has become loose.

I feel that since this radio is only a month old and is also fully guaranteed, you will agree with me that your firm should take care of the necessary adjustments to insure perfect performance again.

Only one local radio shop has the necessary equipment for tramping radio plates, and the charges are \$7.50. However, this shop has no belt to fit my radio.

As I see it, there are two possibilities for action. One is that I send the radio to you for repair. The other is that you send the correct belt to my local shop (The XL Radio Shop, 122 East Washington) and pay the cost of installing the belt as well as the \$7.50 for tramping the plates.

I shall appreciate your prompt reply, as I am especially interested in good radio reception during the baseball season.



**GENTLEMEN:**

**CLAIM FOR DAMAGES DONE TO MY CAR BY YOUR CLIENT**  
(Mr. K. C. Hall, Gary, Indiana—License CG 3035)

On June 9 about 15–20 miles west of Decatur, Illinois, on Highway 48, I was driving 55–60 mph and I overtook a car going about 35. When I was almost even with this car, passing it, something bumped my car hard on the left rear fender and door, shoving me hard to the right and damaging my car.

The something that hit my car (a new four-door XXXX, Illinois license 885-009) was a late-model green XXXXXXXXX driven by your client, Mr. Hall. I estimated that he was driving at least 70, for he whished on by me before stopping, just as I went on around the car I had overtaken.

Inspection revealed that his car was damaged on the back part of the right front fender and on the right front door, mine on the left rear fender and door.

Certainly the accident was no fault of mine, for I was driving in an entirely normal and legal manner. Good judgment on his part would have told him that I was going to pass the car ahead, since I was overtaking it at an estimated difference of 20 mph in speed. Thus he should have checked his speed and waited. He probably blew his horn, as he said he did; but I could not hear it because a diesel train on a near-by parallel track was blowing very loudly. He probably realized that I did not hear when I continued to pull left to pass, but he was driving too fast to control his car.

Since I consider him completely responsible for the accident and damages, I hereby make claim for repairs to my car, as listed on any one of the three enclosed estimates.

## Adjustment Approvals

**Adjustment Policies.** Invariably a claim represents loss of good will and of confidence in the goods or in the firm. The adjustment writer's key job is to minimize those losses by satisfying customers as far as possible at a reasonable cost to the company.

Some companies try to dodge the basic problem by almost literally adopting the policy that the customer is always right (*the caveat vendoris* philosophy). They figure that the few unfair claims cost less in adjustment losses than the liberal policy pays in good will.

Other firms take the opposite view (*caveat emptor*) and make all sales final. Usually they depend on low prices rather than good will to attract a type of customer to which price is the strongest possible appeal.

The great majority take the middle ground between those two extremes: *Treat each claim on its merits and lean a bit toward giving the customer the benefit of the doubt for the sake of unquestioned fairness and the resulting good will.*

That seems to be the most ethical and the most satisfactory policy to most people. Generally a customer will not leave a firm or product after only one disappointment if the firm applies this honest and reasonable policy with finesse. Usually a reasonable person will allow at least a second chance, unless the adjuster loses further good will by his attitude toward the claim or by his bungling techniques in handling it.

Carrying out the recommended policy therefore requires

1. Careful analysis and classification of each claim according to the cause of dissatisfaction and consequently what adjustment is fair.
2. Retaining a reasonable attitude even with testy claimants.
3. Skill in the use of the tools and techniques of adjustment.

**Analysis and Classification of Adjustments.** If the evidence in a claim (and from inspection when deemed necessary) shows clearly that the company or the product was at fault, you may replace the

article free with a perfect one, repair it free, or take it back and refund the money. The last is the least desirable for both buyer and seller. He bought the article for the service he thought it would render; if you take it back, he has to make other arrangements or do without that service. If you replace or repair it, you give him the service, regain his good will, and make him a satisfied customer who will perhaps buy from you again and pass on the good word about you and your products to other prospects. Indeed, about the only occasion when you would refund the money is when you see that a perfect specimen of the article will not do the job for him. And even then, if you have another (perhaps larger or better quality) which you think will satisfy, you should try to give him the service he wanted and justify any higher price in terms of advantages.

If responsibility for the dissatisfaction is clearly the buyer's, you will ordinarily refuse the claim. In rare cases you may decide that a compromise or even a full-reparation adjustment will be the wise thing because of the amount of good will that can be regained at small cost. The weakness in this decision is that it implies your acceptance of responsibility and increases your difficulty in regaining confidence in your goods and service. Whatever your action, your major job is justifying your decision and (usually, if he was at fault) educating the customer. By writing your letter as education to the buyer in the proper use and care of the product (perhaps regular oiling), you may establish the responsibility by implication, avoid irritating the claimant, and prevent future trouble.

If responsibility for the dissatisfaction is uncertain or divided between buyer and product, you will suggest a compromise or make a full adjustment. Again the educational function of the letter is usually important.

When you approve the adjustment, the discussion of favorable replies to inquiries and requests prepares you rather well to write full-reparation adjustment letters, which are, in fact, answers to requests (claims). They are essentially the same in organization and psychology. But there are some basic differences. In answering requests, you have no legal or moral obligations to do anything against your will; in answering claims, you have legal and moral obligations to be fair.

***Attitude of the Adjuster.*** If a firm's adjuster looks on claims as largely the unfair requests of dishonest people or chronic grippers, in time he may reduce the number of claims. People will refrain from making many claims to such a firm—if they don't stop buying there—because they do not like to be considered either dishonest or unreasonable. Most of them aren't, anyway. Out of 5,000,000 on the list of a big mail-order firm, only 2,712, or one twentieth of 1 per cent, tried to take advantage of the firm in five years. So the adjust-

ment man who looks on everybody who makes a claim as somebody trying to take advantage is wrong in fact and wrong in attitude.

Such an attitude not only drives away customers and claims, but it logically prevents the adjuster from making wise use of the claims he does receive. A wise business firm keeps records of claims for statistical analysis, to show weaknesses in its products, methods, services, and personnel. But if the adjuster considers most claims dishonest, he could not logically use them as a basis for making changes.

If, on the other hand, you start with the attitude that a claimant may be misinformed but is honest and reasonable, you will be right much more frequently, and you will do much better. You will use all claims as pointers to improvements in the firm's goods and operations, and your adjustment letters will show appreciation for the help the customer has given. (Even those claims where the buyer is completely at fault point to a need for better instructions to users.) But, more important, you create a much more pleasant situation in which people buy more freely because they know that they can get reasonable adjustments if anything goes wrong.

In addition to this sound attitude, you need a thick skin to be an adjuster. Many claimants will not have learned to keep their shirts on. As a wise adjuster, therefore, you will make it a part of your attitude to ignore personal taunts. You defend yourself, your firm, and your products insofar as you can by explanations; otherwise you accept the claims made. Thus you create a climate of good will and good business.

A claim represents customer dissatisfaction, all right; but it does not necessarily involve really strong negatives which you cannot almost completely overcome with your fair-minded attitude and skillful use of the adjuster's tools and techniques.

**Adjustment Tools and Techniques.** *Using Resale.* Since the adjustment writer's main job is to regain good will and confidence, you will find resale a highly useful tool. Probably nowhere else in letter writing is it more important. Indeed, the main job of an adjustment man is essentially the same as the purpose of resale—to recover or strengthen good will and confidence in the integrity and efficiency of a firm and/or the quality of its goods. Naturally, then, resale is the main tool for doing that job.

*Making Positive Explanations.* Effective resale is impossible, however, unless you avoid the following special pitfalls which frequently trap the untrained adjustment letter writer:

1. Inadequate or inept explanation that leaves the reader thinking slipshod methods of manufacturing or marketing caused the trouble. Explain how careful you really are.
2. Dwelling on the reader's dissatisfaction or the likelihood of his being a lost customer.

3. Passing the buck by attributing the difficulty to a new clerk or an act of God.
4. Trying to hide in the bigness of your firm. About the only way you can use the bigness as acceptable explanation is to sell it in terms of reader benefits along with its weaknesses.
5. Stressing your open-handedness. The reader does not want to be considered a beggar, given things he doesn't deserve.
6. Suggesting future trouble. You only put undesirable ideas into his head if you say "If you have any more difficulty, let us know," or even "I don't believe you'll have any more difficulty." In fact, a big problem in adjustments is what to do about the inherent negative in them.

**Handling Inherent Negatives.** As an adjustment writer, you therefore need to be a master of the techniques for dealing with negatives. They will be one of your stumbling-blocks, for every adjustment situation is full of them. You'll do well to remember the letter writer's definition of *negative* as anything unpleasant to the reader. Moreover, you should remember that a letter writer avoids negative material when he can and subordinates it when he can't. You'll find that you can usually avoid most of the good-will killers like the following, which creep into the letters of untrained adjustment writers:

you claim	policy	damaged	delay
you say	amazed	broken	inconvenience
you state	fault	defective	regret
you (plus any accusing verb)	surprised	unable	sorry

Such wording need not appear. Prune out the negative wording (and implications). Substitute positive phrasing.

**Letters Approving the Adjustment.** When you decide to approve an adjustment, you have an easy letter to write. Since it is a good-news letter (A-plan), you answer the reader's big question in the first sentence as fast as you can. Not only should this sentence tell him that you are approving the adjustment, but it should be worded carefully to avoid any grudging tone and avoid recalling the dissatisfaction any more than necessary. You might almost as well not approve the adjustment, insofar as good will is concerned, as do so in a grudging tone. And, of course, reminding him of his trouble by using negative words would hurt rather than help in your biggest job in this letter—to recover or rebuild good will and confidence in the firm's integrity and efficiency and/or the quality of its products.

The fact that you have approved the adjustment gives you a natural basis for some resale talk on the house. You should use it by interpreting the facts as evidence that you stand behind guarantees, treat the customer right, or some such.

Somewhere in the letter, but not necessarily right after the good

news and its interpretation, you should express appreciation for the claimant's calling your attention to the situation (because the information helps the firm to keep goods and services up to par). This "thank you" does several important things quickly: (1) It shows the reader that you are fair-minded and do not take a distrusting or bitter attitude toward claims. (2) It is basically resale in showing that you are interested in retaining (if not improving) your standards for goods and services. (3) It makes the customer feel good because his claim seems welcome and seems to get careful consideration. Of course, if any steps have been or are being taken to prevent recurrence of claims such as you are answering, you should explain them (to rebuild confidence) and give him as much credit as the facts allow. It sounds good to almost any reader to hear that "On the basis of helpful suggestions like yours, we have decided. . . ."

The biggest part of your letter will be an explanation of the situation. It may be that the product was obviously defective or that the firm was at fault in some way. If there is no good reason or explanation that will put them in a better light, you'd better accept the fact and frankly admit the error or defect rather than make excuses. If you explain specifically how your firm tries to see that everything goes well, most readers will accept that as due precaution and will understand that mistakes do occasionally creep in, despite reasonable care. If you have statistics to show how effective your system is in avoiding mistakes and defective goods, they may be effective in rebuilding the customer's confidence and good will. You want to be careful, though, not to present them in a way that seems to tell the reader he must be odd to have trouble when nearly all your other customers don't.

Though you can't honestly or safely promise that "it will never happen again," you can end pleasantly. Having covered the good news, the explanation, the thanks, and any necessary action of the reader, you can end looking forward, not backward. Apologies or other reminders of the past dissatisfaction merely leave a bad taste in the reader's mouth. A light touch of resale—or even sales-promotion material, if you have a related article that you think would serve him well—can boost his spirit and provide you with a sincere, success-conscious look forward to future business. The customer so well treated will probably return.

The following letter illustrates most of the points:

The enclosed credit memorandum for \$15.60 is an example of Strong-Arch's continuous effort to satisfy our customers in prices, merchandise, and service. We are glad to make this adjustment, requested in your letter of November 28, on the 2 dozen pairs, assorted sizes, of Cordovan Brogues that we shipped you last week.

How your shoes were billed can be explained by a look at the mechanics of our billing department. Whenever our salesmen take an order, they enter a symbol for the particular style, size, and color of shoe. In preparing the invoice, the billing department automatically enters the latest price, which in this case was \$7.50. At the time Mr. Green took your order this price had been in effect only two days. He erroneously entered the old price of \$6.85, which was detected and changed in billing. On future orders any discrepancies between salesmen's orders and current price lists will be referred to one individual for special handling.

We are grateful for your first order. As these shoes become popular with your customers, we know you will want to add some other Strong-Arch models and styles to your stock. All give long wear and comfort to the customer and good profit margins to the dealer.

In addition to the Cordovan Brogue you may want to offer your customers a new style, the Strong-Arch Loafer. It is made of top-grain cowhide, with leather soles and rubber heels, and double-stitched for longer wear. Page 4 of the enclosed leaflet shows you the Loafer as advertised in this month's *Esquire*. When you order these loafers (at only \$4.95 a pair) we'll include in the shipment a split sample shoe so you can show your customers the exact structure.

Though the letter below does not actually send the check in the first sentence, as is usually desirable, it does say emphatically that the adjustment has been approved. This letter is in answer to the claim letter on page 249.

You most certainly will be given a refund on the XXX suit which you purchased, for we support our salesmen in whatever they promise a customer.

The salesman who told you that there would be no sale on XXX suits was sincere in his belief that the price would not be reduced. The XXX manufacturers have never before permitted their suits to be sold at reduced prices. We were notified one week before our summer clothing sale this year that they were permitting a reduction for the first time.

We thank you for calling our attention to this situation, and we are glad to enclose our check for \$13.80.

When you again need clothing, see our salesmen in the Men's Department. You can rely on what they tell you, with full confidence that we will back them up.

Sometimes you will need the customer's help on a few details such as filling out blanks for recovery of damages from a transportation company and returning defective articles. Be sure to cover such points in the one letter to avoid unnecessary correspondence; be sure, also, to make the reader's action as easy as possible.

Your Old South cream and sugar set is being mailed prepaid today so that it will arrive two or three days before the wedding.

Since the Old South set is in keeping with Southern traditions, it will attract favorable glances and comments as guests look over the gifts.

This set is being carefully wrapped with plenty of newspaper and shipped in a corrugated box of  $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thickness. This is thicker than required by shippers, but it will be standard packing for all Old South china from now on. Your report has helped us to improve our service. Thank you.

To save you the trouble of paying for the second shipment, then getting a refund from the Post Office on the first shipment, we are sending a claim form completely filled out except for your signature. Will you please sign it and use the reply envelope for mailing it back to us?

The bride and groom will like the ante-bellum motif of the Old South set and will attach many pleasant memories to it as the years go by.

The appended Check List for Approving Adjustments (p. 641) is comprehensive enough to cover most situations, but not all the points are likely to apply to any one letter.

## VI. Special Good-Will Letters

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- Letters of Deserved Praise
- Letters of Sympathy
- Letters of Appreciation
- Letters of Seasonal Greeting
- Letters of Welcome and Invitation
- Letters Accompanying Favors
- Letters Offering Helpful Information
- Letters Anticipating Resistance

FROM THE preceding discussions and illustrations of various kinds of letters, you certainly realize that all letters should retain and even try to increase the reader's favorable attitude toward the writer and his firm while working primarily on something else.

Certain letters, however, have no other immediate purpose than the cementing of friendly relations between the customer and the house. Though they rarely ask the reader to take any action, indirectly these special good-will letters pave the way for future business.

Crass though it may sound, one businessman realistically summarized the function of good-will letters this way: "Especially on the executive levels, hundreds of letters must be written just to keep in touch and to keep business on the personal basis that we have learned pays off."

Because your readers know you do not *have* to write special good-will letters, these unexpected letters are especially effective in overcoming the impression of store indifference.

All too often the only times a customer receives word from a firm are when someone wants him to buy or to pay for something or when he demands attention by making a claim or threatening to close his account. This apparent lack of interest is borne out in practically all reliable surveys of why firms lose customers. About 7 out of 10 lost customers just drift away. Yet 8 out of 10 are reclaimable if given some attention. Only 1 per cent of lost customers have real grievances that need adjusting. And a large part of the 70 per cent who do drift away would undoubtedly not do so if they were reminded that the

business firm appreciates their patronage and has a continuing interest in their welfare.

Where people take their trade depends not just on quality, price, and convenience; these are usually comparable in several different outlets. There may be other reasons, but most of us trade where we do because (1) we like the people and (2) we appreciate the extra-service considerations—the personal and friendly aspects.

In theory, good-will letters sell only friendship. Some do no more than that—ostensibly. But we should admit to ourselves in all honesty that “pure” friendship is a commodity not bought and sold. We should also admit that a letter on a firm’s letterhead, signed by a representative of the firm, is promotional, regardless of its personal nature. The cultivation of business is inherent in the circumstance itself. No writer need be reluctant to establish the virtues of his firm’s services and goods and to place them at the disposal of his reader. But he should be frank from the outset. The main thing to guard against is appearing to be offering only friendship in the first part of the letter and then shifting to an obvious immediate sales pitch.

Most special good-will letters are low-pressure messages with potential or postponed sales possibilities. These are more accurately called business-promotion letters (or just “promotional” or “promotion”). They should be differentiated from both the personal letter that is just a friendly note with no sales axe to grind and from the obvious and avowed sales letter. It is impossible to draw a fine line of distinction between the two, however, or to establish definitions and classifications that conform with the varying ways different people use the terms.

Certainly some of these “unnecessary” business letters are of such highly personal nature that to use an obvious form would be insulting, to include sales talk or resale talk on either firm or merchandise would be ludicrous, and to write very much would likely result in gushiness. Letters of deserved praise and of sympathy certainly fall into this category. Letters expressing appreciation, extending seasonal greetings, issuing invitations, accompanying favors (or services), or offering helpful information do likewise if they are strictly good-will letters; but the majority of these are form letters including sales-building talk and thus are promotional.

**Letters of Deserved Praise.** Letters praising people are essentially congratulatory. Though they may not contain the word *congratulations*, the spirit is there. In them you are recognizing a significant event or accomplishment in the life of your reader: a job promotion, election to an office, receiving an honor, winning a contest, graduation, marriage, birth of a child, completion of a new plant or office, a project or a report successfully completed. All these and many more

are instances when you can show not only customers but also friends and acquaintances that you are interested in what happens to them. Some of the better ones are just a few lines:

When I saw that you've been named Plant Manager of Tri-States, I was delighted!

It's a well-earned recognition.

And it couldn't happen to a more deserving fellow!

(Any salutary effects of the foregoing passages would be lost if the writer followed with such an idea as "Now that you're earning more, surely you'd like to consider more insurance" or "buy more clothes.")

~~~~~  
I have just completed your article about credit control in the recent issue of *Credit World*.

Heartiest congratulations on a job well done!

~~~~~  
I can appreciate your deep satisfaction and pride in John's graduation *cum laude* from Haverford last week.

Congratulations to him—and also to his parents.

~~~~~  
Congratulations to you and your wife on the birth of your son. And good wishes to all of you.

~~~~~  
We share your pride and happiness in the completion of the new Henderson plant.

It is a criterion of business, as well as civic, accomplishment.

Good wishes from all of us. (Or "Sincere wishes for your continued success.")

If these strike you as being more like a telegram than a letter, remember that timeliness is important in letters like these, probably of equal importance with what you actually say. The friendly thought behind the message counts most.

A note like the following would certainly engender good feeling (and probably stimulate the salesman to greater productivity):

Congratulations, Steve Mason, on winning the home movie camera!

I know it took a lot of planning and hard work to exceed your previous records and to nose out every other salesman in the Midwest District.

You have the personality, the drive, and the intelligence to take you places in your career with General Milling.

Incidentally, I'm glad that you have the camera while your children are little. The film record of their growth will become more treasured to you and your wife as the years go by.

Or this:

Your analysis of production difficulties at the Saginaw plant was one of the clearest, most easily read reports I've ever been privileged to study.

We're carrying out some of your recommendations immediately.

Several of us look forward to discussing the report with you when you return to the home office in about two weeks.

In the meantime, thanks for a job well done.

Many people in both their business and their private lives have discovered the gratifying responses of associates, customers, and just personal friends at the receipt of a newspaper or magazine clipping of interest to the reader. A simple greeting (it may be no more than "Good Morning") and a line or two like "This clipping made me think of you" or "I thought you might be interested in this clipping" are enough. A folder is a common form. People who could expect to use such a mailing often would find a printed form a great saving of time; others would probably send a handwritten or typewritten note like

Let me add my commendation to those you've undoubtedly already received as a result of the enclosed clipping.

It's a pleasure to know a man like you.

The obvious substitutions like "to be associated with" or "to serve" or "to have a friend" readily suggest themselves on the appropriate occasions.

Still another variation of a letter deservedly praising someone is one you write to a third person about a second person who, in your opinion, merits recognition or appreciation or both. The man who wrote the following letter to an airline official made at least two friends for himself:

On your Flight 127 from Chicago to San Francisco last Tuesday, I was pleased with every phase of the service. But I was especially pleased with the conduct of Captain A. L. Lutz.

While at the controls he kept us well informed on flight conditions and frequently pointed out places of interest enroute. When he walked through the cabin, he was the soul of hospitality and courtesy to every passenger—particularly to a six-year-old-boy who was making his first flight!

As we came in at San Francisco in bright moonlight, Captain Lutz circled the Bay and pointed out sights of interest; it was a thoughtful gesture that all of us appreciated.

The smooth, pleasant ride was made memorable through the "little extras" of Captain Lutz.

My thanks and commendations to the line and to him.

Any time someone renders outstanding service is an appropriate occasion to relay, via letter, your understanding and appreciation of its significance. Such a gesture not only impresses the reader with the writer's "humanness"; it can and often does earn him preferential treatment on subsequent occasions.

When I brought my two children to the glove counter of Burger's today to purchase a Christmas gift for their mother, I appreciated very much the patience and courtesy of the sales woman who assisted us.

I did not get her card; nor can I find the sales slip to give you her sales number. She is of medium build and has black hair (my daughter says she was wearing a beige knitted outfit).

We were in the store about one o'clock and the children had not yet had lunch; they were, therefore, fidgety and a little difficult. They asked to see at least a dozen different styles and colors, some of which even I recognized as duplicates. They asked many pointless questions. They argued with one another. But in helping them arrive at a selection, she remained calm and patient. And she was certainly tactful and diplomatic when our eleven-year-old spilled a box of glove powder all over the counter and onto the floor!

No doubt she will remember us. . . . But please tell her that we remember her too—with gratitude.



Last Friday your representative, Mr. John Wade, answered our call for help when one of our motors failed at a crucial time.

We appreciated the promptness with which he came, of course. But we appreciated even more the efficiency which he displayed in getting it running again. He was considerate of all around him and thoughtful enough not to leave a mess for us to clean up.

Our thanks to you and to Mr. Wade; we shall remember on other occasions.

Obviously, it is also often appropriate under such circumstances to write directly to the person whose performance you praise, as in the following instance:

If such an award were given by the U.S. Chamber Workshop, you'd certainly get the "E" for excellence, John.

Your Thursday afternoon clinic met with more enthusiastic reactions than I've observed in a long time.

It is a rewarding experience to work with people like you.

With a second letter to the speaker's dean (taking only two minutes' dictation time), the writer could spread good will all around:

Everyone at MSU working with us on the U.S. Chamber Workshop contributed and cooperated in exemplary fashion, Dean White.

We are most grateful to all of you.

John Fohr's Thursday afternoon clinic met with such enthusiastic reaction that I feel I should report the group reaction to you. He had men like Ed Sherrer, the Memphis Division Manager, eating out of his hand!

Deservedly so, in my opinion.

Congratulatory letters, including birthday and anniversary greetings, are practically always individualized. Sympathy letters—the most personal of any special good-will letters—must be.

**Letters of Sympathy.** Most of us are accustomed to lending a helping hand and extending expressions of encouragement when friends and family suffer some adversity. The same sympathetic attitude should prevail when a business friend experiences misfortune. Admittedly, letters of condolence are some of the most difficult of the special good-will letters to write because of the melancholy circumstances. But they are certainly appreciated by everyone. When a report of a retailer's illness reaches a wholesaler (or a manufacturer), he can certainly gain good will with a short, human, and essentially positive note like the following:

Sorry, Sam—

—to hear that you're back in the hospital with another heart flare-up.

But with rest and good care you'll be back at the store sooner than you think.

I've always enjoyed you as a friend and valued you as a business associate; so for two reasons I hope that all goes well with you again soon.



We were distressed to learn of the automobile accident that hospitalized you and Mrs. Sigler recently.

It's good to know, however, that you are now up and about.

We certainly hope that Mrs. Sigler's condition will improve and that there will be no further complications.

As a result of accident, illness, and advancing age, most of us find ourselves having to write letters concerning the death of someone we've known. To the surviving partner of a business, for example, the following letter would be a comfort. It would help to convince him of the writer's friendly interest and concern.

We were genuinely distressed to learn of the death of Mr. Guin, your partner and our good friend for many years.

Though the firm of Guin and Beatty will feel the effects of his absence, it is too well founded and has been too well operated over the years for any serious dislocations to happen.

The great loss is to the community and the Guin family. The good judgment, vision, and integrity that Mr. Guin displayed as a business leader in your city undoubtedly were also reflected in his private life.

In extending these words of sympathy, we should also like to add a few of encouragement and confidence in the future; we feel sure that would have been Mr. Guin's attitude.

Even though the writer of the preceding letter might not have met the widow (and/or the surviving offspring), certainly no offense would be taken if such a message as the following were received:

For many years we enjoyed a business friendship with Mr. Guin.

We respected him as a good businessman who insisted on high standards in serving the public and was always just, fair, and co-operative in his relations with us. We admired the good judgment, vision, and integrity he showed as a business leader in your community.

To you who saw these and other fine qualities in greater detail and frequency than we were privileged to, we offer our sympathy in respect and humility.

May his contributions to your life in former days make the days to come easier to cope with.

It is impossible for such a letter not to have an emotional impact. But the effect can be lessened if writers will refrain from quoting Scripture or poetry. And sepulchral overtones will not be so powerful if death is accepted as the inevitability it is and the word itself used rather than euphemisms like "passed away," "passed to his reward," and "departed." Certainly, such a letter is going to be a greater comfort when it emphasizes the good characteristics and the outstanding contributions of the dead individual rather than the sorrow and anguish of the survivor. Possibly you will find writing such letters a little less difficult and will write more truly comforting messages if you accept the thought that good, worthwhile people continue to exert their influence in the hearts and minds of those who knew them.

Adversity also strikes in other forms—fires, floods, accidents and lawsuits, labor unrest and work stoppage. When it does, the victim(s) will appreciate a message that says, "We're your friends; we understand the significance of this to you; we hope everything will work out successfully." If you really mean the offer and are in a position to extend it, you can add the equivalent of "Call on us if we can help." The following are examples:

All of us were sorry to hear of the fire that destroyed your warehouse night before last.

It's a tough break.

We're sure, however, that the same determination and ingenuity that helped you to build your business so successfully will also see you through this temporary set-back.

Now if this writer had some unused storage space and wanted to offer it, he might very well close with

We have a 30 x 40 room that we won't need for another 90 days; if that will help tide you over in any way, give me a ring.

But to propose to rent the space would change the complexion of the letter and destroy any good will built up in the opening passages.

If a supplier were writing the foregoing to an out-of-town customer, he might want to close with

We want to do all we can to help you over this emergency. For a customer like you we certainly can stretch our credit terms and expedite deliveries if you want us to.

He might even want to add

We'd like to show in some way our appreciation of the co-operation you've always shown in our relationship.

Even in letters of condolence, a deftly phrased reference to your appreciation can be appropriate.

*Letters of Appreciation.* You have no doubt observed that most congratulatory messages also involve an element of thanks; likewise, most thank-you letters contain some commendatory passages. It's really just a question of where you want your emphasis to go.

Letters that emphasize appreciation for strictly good-will purposes are not nearly so numerous as those that are also promotional. When you thank a customer for patronage, for prompt payment, for recommending you or your firm to a friend, these are business-promotion letters with obvious tie-ins to service (including quality of merchandise).

Strictly good-will thank-you letters—in response to a favor extended, for work on a project (member of a fund-raising team, for example), or for a contribution—have their origins in civic, educational, and religious surroundings rather than in business.

Many thanks for the untiring, cheerful way you worked on the recent Red Feather Drive.

Through effort like yours we exceeded our goal.

Possibly the knowledge that you have helped materially to provide clothing, food, and medical care during the coming year for underprivileged children will be slightly more gratifying with this expression of appreciation.



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For the 32,000 youth of Athens . . .

Thanks a million!

Your generous gift to the new Y building is another evidence of your concern for the boys and girls of our city and county.

We want you to know how much we appreciate your co-operation in this project. As citizens and parents, we'll all be happy about our share in it for years to come.

~~~~~  
thank you            thank you            thank you

To you these tickets mean an evening of top-notch entertainment, but to the children of Jefferson County the price of these tickets will mean many things.

Every cent of profit from the Junior League's presentation of "Jubilee" will be spent in Jefferson County for Jefferson County children to provide

Medical care for children at the League's Children's Clinic held every Friday.

Dental care for children at the League's Dental Clinic every Thursday.

Milk for undernourished children who attend these clinics.

A nursing scholarship of \$250 to a student in the School of Nursing who needs assistance.

In addition, the League furnishes clerical help to the Crippled Children's Clinic, maintains a Clothes Closet for needy families whose children attend our clinics, and sponsors the annual Christmas Carolling with the co-operation of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

League members and the children of our county thank you sincerely for your part in making all this possible.

As a matter of fact, you can't call the preceding letters pure good-will letters; for, obviously, the resale phrases are designed to convince the reader of the worth of the projects and thus prepare him for the next time a request comes along.

Letters written by business firms are even more definitely promotional.

Any time is a good time to send an expression of appreciation to good customers for their patronage or for handling accounts satisfactorily. Even the rubber-stamped notation on a current bill, "One of the pleasures of being in business is serving a good customer like you," has a heartening effect. But most stores do more. Upon the first use of the account some stores send a thank-you note like the following:

We hope that you enjoyed the initial use of your account which was opened recently, and that you were entirely satisfied with the merchandise and service.

If you have any suggestions to offer that will help make the account more convenient, we shall welcome them. We want to do everything possible to merit your continued patronage.

Thank you for the patronage you have given us; we cordially invite you to make further use of your account.

Usually, however, credit managers wait until the customer has used the account for six months or a year, sometimes longer. Because of the rush of business, such letters all too often are sent only around holiday and special-event times. In too many such cases they don't do the effective job they might because too many other people and stores are sending greetings and good-will letters on those special occasions. Arriving unexpectedly and without apparent reason, the following note is a pleasant reminder of the firm's appreciation:

Believe us—

—your continued patronage and friendship are appreciated.

And to hold your friendship and patronage, we certainly intend to continue giving you the sort of service and honest values that you deserve.

Come see us often.

When an account has not been used for some time and then a debit appears on the ledger, many credit men wisely send a thank-you note:

Thank you for the purchase you made recently.

It's good to hear you say "Charge it" again, for we've really missed you.

To serve you so well you'll want to come in more often is our constant aim.

Letters thanking customers for paying promptly are simply a more specialized version of the ones we've been examining. They are also effective means of discouraging or reducing collection problems. Such a simple note as the following not only pleases the customer; it reinforces his determination to maintain the good habit:

Your check this morning in prompt payment of last month's purchases made me think, "I wish all our accounts were handled so efficiently."

It's a real pleasure to service an account like yours, and we thank you sincerely for your co-operation.

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You can also easily tie in the expression of appreciation with a concrete reminder of the benefits the customer gains from taking care of obligations as he has promised:

Thank you for the splendid manner in which you paid out your recent account.

With your record of prompt payments, your credit at Black's is firmly established. You needn't postpone adding fresh, new things to keep your home alive and interesting. It's thrifty and wise to enjoy these things while you save for them on small payments.

Come in often and make full use of the many services this large, complete home store can render you, whether it's just a window shade or a complete houseful of furniture.

Such letters may appropriately be detailed developments of the theme:

It's sad but true . . . that ninety-five per cent of our customers rarely hear from the Credit Department.

But believe me, people like you who unfailingly take care of your obligations as promised are a continual source of pleasure.

Month after month, year after year, your prompt payments have enhanced the desirability of your account. We know that such a fine record will continue and thus increase the esteem in which we hold you.

We know that with the ups and downs of business, some payments come pretty hard. All the more reason we appreciate your record.

We know, too, that the excellent business judgment and vision behind such a record is the surest signal of continued success. We are grateful for having been allowed to contribute in a small way, and we look forward to continued happy relations.

Certainly, if you keep your eyes and ears open, you'll find many other occasions for saying thank you to your customers and clientele. When a customer recommends you or your firm to another person, you'll certainly benefit in the long run by sending a cheerful, personalized note like the following:

It was a pleasure to have you bring Mrs. Stallings into the shop recently. We enjoyed meeting her and seeing you again.

Thank you for this expression of confidence in us. We shall do all we can to serve her well and to continue to merit your patronage and recommendation to your friends.



It was generous of you to suggest to Mr. Lee that he come to us for quality men's wear.

He came in yesterday and seemed pleased with what we were able to show him.

Thank you. We're looking forward to his next visit.

When a firm writes such letters of appreciation to an individual, no reply is expected. And when an individual takes the time to pay a business firm a compliment or to express appreciation for good service, no answer is *required*. But you establish yourself as a courteous, polite person if you do reply. Furthermore, appropriate resale talk helps to strengthen the friendly feeling as well as to pave the way for future business. The following letter emphasizes gratitude for kind words but adroitly stresses service:<sup>1</sup>

The personnel of our Birmingham station quite proudly sent us your letter complimenting Delta personnel for their assistance in transporting Otto to his new home.

It was a real pleasure to receive such an excellent commendation, and we're happy to pass this along to all those who assisted along the way.

In these days of rapidly growing transportation problems, and with the volume of traffic mounting so fast, we sometimes feel that Delta's past record of outstanding personalized service may not be attainable today in spite of our best efforts.

Then, at just the right time, along comes a letter like yours to show that our station personnel are still doing a good job of public relations. It is a genuine pleasure to hear of the excellent way they handled the many details, and we do appreciate your taking time to tell us.

When you receive suggestions for improved service (some of which will be outright complaints requiring adjustment letters), an acknowledgment *is* required, particularly if you have invited the suggestion.

We certainly thank you for pointing out how we can improve our system for providing free parking to shoppers at Wiesel's.

Starting next Monday we shall have all customers pick up their tokens at the cashier's booth on the ground floor. And we shall have the parking lot entrance to the store completely cleared for easier flow of customer traffic.

We welcome your suggestions for better service and are sure that this change will make shopping at Wiesel's a greater pleasure than it was before.

***Letters of Seasonal Greeting.*** A modified form of the thank-you letter is the one of seasonal greeting. By far the most common time is

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with the permission of the author, Mr. W. D. Huff, Manager of Customer Relations, Delta Air Lines, Inc., Atlanta.

around Christmas and New Year, though some stores send them shortly before Easter, Valentine's Day, or Thanksgiving, when they do not have as much competition from other mailings. Since they must be mass mailings in most firms (to keep down costs), they are rarely personalized.

It is pertinent to point out that the Red Feather letter, the Y letter, and the Junior League letter (p. 198) were all obvious printed forms, thus conserving the funds of the organizations for more worthy causes. Business organizations, also, despite their size and resources, must also conserve employee effort and time (as well as funds) by using some modifications of form treatment in many of the thank-you and seasonal-greeting letters they mail. Ideally, these letters would be individualized from inside address through signature; as a practical matter, they often are not. The undisguised form can be successful, however:

Business firms too pause at this season to count their blessings.

Good friends and customers like you are one of our greatest.

So we want to tell you how much we appreciate your patronage at the same time we send heartiest wishes for

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL NEW YEAR!

With the references to "customers" and "patronage," the letter is promotional in effect. Most emphatically you would not want sales material in a letter with such an opening theme. The following holiday-greeting letter, however, is an overt attempt to cultivate business, and perhaps wisely so in the light of how a savings and loan association functions and the kind of service it provides members:

#### GREETINGS AT THE NEW YEAR!

Hearts are never as full of peace and happiness as when friends and loved ones gather in the home at this season of good cheer and fellowship.

Through the years your Association has played a part in providing homes for its members through sound home-financing plans that lead to real debt-free home ownership. Won't you please tell your friends about your Association and recommend its services to them? They will appreciate knowing of the easy, convenient terms upon which a loan may be repaid.

Our officers and directors join in thanking you for your help in the past year, and wish you happiness and health in 19\_\_ and for years to come.

Most of the time you will be on safer ground if you exclude such promotional passages and concentrate on a simple wish for the customer's well-being, along with an expression of gratitude.

**Letters of Welcome and Invitation.** One of the most popular forms of a good-will letter is that greeting newcomers to a community and offering to be of assistance, particularly during the orientation period. Almost always it is an invitation to come in and get acquainted; it also emphasizes the services of the inviting firm. One unusual and unexpected example is the following from a public library:

Welcome to Evansville!

We're glad to have you as new members of our progressive city.

Your library card is ready for your use. We hope you'll be down soon to pick it up and to become acquainted with the staff and the services. For your reading pleasure and research over a hundred thousand volumes are available. Staff members will gladly assist you in finding what you seek. All of the leading magazines and newspapers are available in the lounge.

The children's room is also well supplied with both fictional and non-fictional books on a wide variety of topics of interest to youngsters six to fifteen.

If you enjoy musical recordings, you may want to check out some of the thousand-odd albums ranging from the most recent popular music to the classics.

We shall be glad to give you maps of the city, to supply directions—in short, to help you in any way we can to know Evansville better than you now do.

The library is open from 9 A.M. until 10 P.M. every week day. We are glad to answer telephone inquiries during that time.

Please come in soon.

Such a letter—with no sales axe to grind—is the essence of good will in its spirit. It is more likely to be accepted at its face value than the usual letter from a firm with commercial/profit aspirations, such as the following:

As a new resident of our Friendly City, you are cordially invited to visit the Federal Bank. We should like to get to know you. Even though you may have already selected a bank, it would be a pleasure to welcome you to Blankville personally and to explain the many services the Federal offers its customers.

The Federal has given prompt, courteous, and efficient banking services to the people of Blankville for over 75 years, and we would appreciate the opportunity of serving you.

Among the conveniences in Federal's modern banking quarters are the four drive-in tellers that enable you to bank without alighting from your car. And in the parking garage right in our own build-

ing you may have 30 minutes of free parking while taking care of your banking business.

You may also bank around the clock at the Federal; a complete mail deposit service and a twenty-four hour depository are located in our parking garage.

Furthermore, branch banks in Freeport and in Norwood can accommodate you when you do not wish to come downtown.

You have complete banking facilities when you bank with the Federal.

Won't you come in for a friendly visit soon?

Most readers would probably recognize this letter for the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing that it is. It is an obvious attempt to get a new account, and the attempts to establish friendly feeling are thin and transparent. Better to discard the talk of "get to know you" and "friendly visit" and get right down to brass tacks established with an opening like "Since you are a newcomer to Blankville and will need a conveniently located bank with complete facilities, may we tell you what we can offer you at the Federal?"

On the other hand, the invitation to a special event extended in the following letter would probably be read with interest; it builds good will because it expresses a desire to render service; no resale (except that inherent in the action itself) or sales talk distracts:

Will you be our guest?

Beginning next Thursday, May 31, and every Thursday after that for the rest of the summer, Brentling's will present prominent lecturers and editors reviewing the most talked-about recent books.

All the reviews will be held in the auditorium on the sixth floor (air-conditioned, of course, like the rest of Brentling's) and will begin promptly at 2 P.M.

This Thursday Miss Evelyn Kuppenheimer, popular literary editor of the *Times*, will review Angeline Locke's *Voodoo on the Levee*—a powerful, gripping story of the ante-bellum South.

We hope you will be with us to enjoy this initial literary treat and as many of the others as you possibly can.

Someone connected with credit control can easily maintain a list of newcomers to the community and mail a form letter—which can easily be individualized—like this one (which does not promise credit, please note, but only invites the application):

Welcoming you to this community gives us a great deal of pleasure. We hope soon to count you as one of our good friends. Our credit department will be glad to handle your credit application at your request.

We invite you to use our lounging and rest rooms on the mezzanine or the fountain luncheonette, where you can get a deliciously prepared, well-balanced luncheon at reasonable prices. Rollins' spacious parking lot, located only 15 feet from the rear entrance to the store, is absolutely free to you when you shop here, no matter if your purchase is only a spool of thread. On Rollins' remodeled third floor you'll find home furnishings. The advice of our interior decorators is available to you at no obligation. And in the remodeled downstairs you'll find an entirely new and complete food mart and new homeware section.

We are here to serve you. And we hope that you too will soon feel as one of our customers recently was kind enough to say to us, "The longer people live in this community, the more they trade at Rollins'."

When you can verify the credit reliability (usually an easy thing to do), you may elect to set up the account and so inform the reader:

We know that stores, too, make a difference to a person making a home in a new community.

To serve you in as friendly manner as possible is one of our aims. As an earnest assurance of our desire to show you every possible courtesy that will make for a permanent and happy business friendship, we have opened a convenient charge account in your name.

The next time you are in the store, simply say "Charge it" to the person waiting on you.

We hope to see you soon—and often.

The following special invitation letter is frankly a low-pressure sales letter. It does offer a service in making shopping easier, but the primary emphasis is on sales.

For our best customers we're having an Open House the evenings of Wednesday, December 7, through Saturday, December 10. The store will be open until 9 these evenings, and you are invited to come and "just look" to your heart's content.

Refreshments will be served from 6 to 8, and our sales personnel will simply act as hosts. No public announcement will be made of this event.

With an eye to Christmas giving, you may want to examine some of the popular pocket-size transistor radios or portable TV's. Many G-E and R.C.A. models will be available for your inspection. The Whirlpool portable dishwasher is an especially welcome gift for a busy wife and mother. And of course the 19\_\_\_ models in G-E refrigerators, washers and dryers, and other appliances will be on display. Any attendant will gladly demonstrate one of these for you.

This Open House is intended as a departure from business routine—one that will give us a better opportunity to get acquainted with you and give you the opportunity of working out your Christmas gift problems at leisure. Won't you come in one or more of these evenings?

Letters seeking the revival of an account are but modified versions of invitation letters. When an account remains unused for any length of time—say three months or six months, depending on management's choice—it may be a signal that the customer is drifting away because of store indifference, or it may be the result of a real grievance. Letters inviting the customer back to the store, reselling the store's merchandise and services, stressing "How can we serve you better?" and finally asking forthrightly, "May we continue to serve you?" can be mailed individually or in a series. One of the finest we've ever seen is this one:

#### Spring fever?

Here's a SURE cure—a Beachstone suit, coat, or dress, spiced with the right accessories.

Easy to choose, easy to buy, too. Simply use your charge account at Wilson's. It's as good as new and just waiting for your "charge it" to be as useful as ever.

So come in soon! See and try on the beautiful new spring apparel, millinery, shoes, and other accessories that we have assembled for your Easter pleasure.

You can easily pattern any such letter after this one, which is built on sales-promotional material and an action ending suggesting a visit to the store. Letters built around special events, such as Christmas, readily supply a theme (though they may lose some effect by competition with many others):

A welcome warm as Santa's smile awaits you at Bowen's!

We're all decked out with our Christmas bests; so it's an easy job to find the right gift for everyone on your Christmas list.

Practical gifts, starry-eyed gifts . . . and all conveniently in one store . . . Bowen's . . . where you can just say, "Charge it" for ALL your Christmas giving.

With warmest holiday greetings

Accompanying a new credit card, one letter solicited the renewal of the customer's business with:

Ordinarily we'd send you this enclosure with our monthly statement. Since your account hasn't been used recently, we're sending it along with some "Back to School" suggestions.

You may be thinking of complete outfits for your own child or a "Back to School" gift for a favorite niece, nephew, or friend. You'll find complete selections of dependable quality Bowen merchandise in every department.

Your charge account is just as good as ever—whether you come to the store, phone, or shop by mail.

Some writers studiously avoid asking whether anything is wrong. (See p. 297.) Some stores send a dozen or so mailings before asking. A favorite form is the letter written on only one half of the page (usually the left side) with a caption, "Here's Our Side of the Story." At the top of the right side blank space appears another caption, "Won't You Tell Us Your Side of the Story?" Regardless of the format, most of these letters make a request much like this one:

One of my duties as Credit Manager of Bowen's is to check up on our service.

Since your account has not been used for quite some time, the only way we can be sure we have pleased you with our merchandise and service is to hear directly from you.

Just use the handy form and the convenient stamped envelope enclosed to tell us whether you want us to keep your charge account open.

We will certainly do our best to please you.

Will you write us . . . now?

We'll surely appreciate it!

**Letters Accompanying Favors.** Often as a good-will reminder a businessman or firm finds some novelty or favor that he can mail inexpensively along with a note reiterating the desire to be of service, such as the following from a women's shoestore:

The specially-treated purse-size brush accompanying this letter is for your use in keeping your handsome EVERETT suede shoes spotless wherever you wear them.

Accept it with our compliments and the hope that you will be completely happy with your recent selection from EVERETT's collection of footwear for the discriminating woman.

In a somewhat humorous vein one company recently mailed a pocket-size calorie counter to an extensive list of customers and prospects with this short note:

"Everything's expanding—especially my waistline," grumbled a friend recently.

Just in case you (or someone you know) may need to fight this perennial battle of the bulge, we're sending you this handy calorie counter that you can use at home or at a banquet or at a lunch counter.

Accept it with our compliments—and the hopes that we'll be seeing you soon.

Small gadgets galore are used in this manner. Just as in tricks in sales letters, however, they are better if related to the product or service of the firm. A real-estate agency might appropriately send a pocket- or purse-size map of the city to which a person has just moved, along with the following:

Welcome to Jacksonville.

To help you get places faster and to know your new city better, we're sending you a map showing the principal thoroughfares and location of the principal landmarks and facilities.

Note that the Coleman Agency is located in an accessible area with adequate parking facilities nearby.

We would welcome the opportunity to help you in any way we can.

***Letters Offering Helpful Information.*** Large companies sponsoring radio and TV programs, as well as research projects and publications, rapidly accumulate names and addresses of people who are interested in being kept informed. As part of the public-relations or good-will program, many of these companies periodically send letters like the following:

Perhaps you will be interested in a program, "Life under the Sea," scheduled for Sunday, January 22, at 8 P.M. over NBS-TV.

"Life under the Sea" was directed by Emile Ravage, with the assistance of the marine biologist Albert Gaudin. It is the third in a series of such productions sponsored by the Rawlston System.

We hope these programs will help to broaden public understanding of science and to encourage some young people at least to consider scientific careers.

We shall welcome your comments after you have seen the program.



As a teacher of advertising, perhaps you will be able to use the accompanying brochure, "The Evolution of a Woman's Home Journal Ad."

You are welcome to quote liberally in your classes and to reproduce anything in it.

At least, we hope you will enjoy reading it.



The exciting events in Detroit leading up to the introduction of the new models last month made a story too detailed to print completely in TEMPO.

If you read the condensed version in the issue of two weeks ago, you'll agree that the accompanying report-analysis we're sending to selected educators and businessmen is a worthwhile expansion and supplementation. If you didn't . . . well, we think you'll want to now.

**Letters Anticipating Resistance.** In the interest of forestalling complaints and minimizing dissatisfaction, many business executives give advance notice when something like an interruption of service, a curtailment of service, or a price increase is scheduled to take place. (The same kind of advance mailing can also pave the way for the call of a solicitor for charitable contributions.) In almost all instances these letters (often only postcards) must be obvious forms. They need to stress service—improved service, if possible; at least, maintaining superior service or quality of goods—as an antidote for the inherently negative material the message has to establish. This message of a power company is typical (dates and times varied according to areas and so were stamped in):

In order to provide better service for you and our other customers in your area, we have installed new equipment, which we plan to place in service

April 15, 19\_\_\_\_  
between 1 and 2 P.M.

To safeguard the men who do this work, we shall have to shut off power during this time. Service will be restored as promptly as possible. We appreciate your co-operation in making this improved service possible.

A notification of price increase is really just a modified sales letter. Admittedly, it is never an easy letter to write. But, with specific details supporting the increase, it may be successful in retaining some customers who would otherwise be lost. The following notice went to all customers of a diaper service:

DEAR CRIB CUSTOMER:

In the early 1940's when we first started lending mothers a hand with laundry for infants and babies, diapers cost 90¢ a dozen. Now they cost \$3.61.

Paper during the same period increased from 6¢ to 27¢ a pound and soap from 8¢ to 32¢.

To continue giving our customers satisfactory service, we had to increase our prices in the late 40's and again in the 50's.

In the meantime all these items have continued to increase in price and now are from one-fifth to one-half more than they were then. Wages for our help, taxes, and other costs that we cannot control have also risen appreciably.

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And so in order to continue the same twice-a-week pick-up and delivery, and the same high standards of cleanliness and sanitation that we know you as a parent want for your child, we shall have to receive payment for services as listed on the enclosed card. These prices will go into effect at the beginning of the month.

Please note that these increases average approximately 3¢ a day. You still are paying only 50¢ a day for service that makes life much easier for you, conserves your strength, and provides your child clothing that is sterilized to a degree impossible in most homes.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and shall continue to do all we can to merit your confidence and your patronage.



It would be possible to classify and illustrate hundreds of situations in which a special good-will letter would be appropriate and would cement a friendship for you and your firm. If you are alert to conditions, if you keep informed about what is happening to your clientele, if you honestly like people and enjoy pleasing them, you certainly won't lack for opportunity to write such letters. You'll be surfeited with occasions! In this short treatment, therefore, we have tried to concentrate on the most common instances; it is intended as a springboard for your thinking and practice rather than an extensive catalogue.

Special good-will letters can do a big *extra* job for you; but remember that *all* your letters should build good will through courteous, sincere tone and the service attitude.

# VII. Disappointing Messages

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Refusing the Request

The Buffer Beginning

Reasons Rather than Apologies

The Derived, Positive Refusal

The Pleasant, Hopeful Ending

Acknowledgments of Incomplete or Indefinite Orders

Delays and Back-Ordering

Acknowledgments Declining Orders

Unacceptable Dealer

Improper Channels

Selling a Substitute

Combinations

Refusing the Adjustment

Compromising on the Adjustment

Requests for Credit Information from Customers

Credit Refusals

FOR THE same reason that good news is its own best harbinger, bad news is not. If you do not recall the suggestions about handling disappointing messages in Chapter IV (pp. 103-5), turn back and quickly review them.

## Refusing the Request

If you care little or nothing about your reader's continued good feeling toward you, you can quickly and easily write a refusal like this:

I'm very sorry, but company practice forbids giving out information such as you requested.

Even if you care a lot about your reader's continued good feeling toward you, you *can* write a believable turndown letter that begins with the refusal—for example:

I'm very glad to explain to you, Mr. Willet, why Rigate spends its advertising dollars on radio time and magazine space rather than on the distribution of samples.

But most correspondence supervisors and correspondence counselors advocate what they call the "reason-first refusal." The brevity of the

first example above and the dispatch of the second are not desirable in refusals because most people are disappointed, irritated, or downright angry when told they can't have something or can't do something. And in any of these emotional states they will not give full attention to your explanation even though most people instinctively react with "Why?" when they are denied something.

Back of most refusals is some good reason(s) dictated by sound business judgment. And usually it can be told. That is why we say that most refusals have an educating job to do: they usually have to acquaint the reader with some circumstance of which he is apparently unaware. Hence the emphasis on *explanation before refusing*.

Furthermore, one of the first lessons in good human relations that any sensitive person learns is that when you take something away from someone or deny him something, you give a reason, you give him something else to compensate for the loss when you can, and you try to extend some gesture of friendliness.

Simply stated, the desirable pattern for most refusals is

- a buffer beginning (establishing compatibility; defined and illustrated below)
- a review of facts (reasons)
- the refusal itself, subordinated } OR a counterproposal which implies the refusal
- an off-the-subject ending }

Before studying an analysis of this suggested structure, however, read the following refusal of the request for toothpaste samples (p. 243):

Sales-minded businessmen are keenly aware of the advertising possibilities which usually accompany such an occasion as "A" Day at your University.

If they have found such advertising to be sufficiently productive to warrant the cost, they are quick to take advantage of the opportunity; and we here at Rigate are no exception.

After experimenting with many different forms of advertising, however, we have found that we obtain best results at the least expense by advertising in nationally circulated magazines—*Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example—and by sponsoring the Picote Theatre, which millions of Americans enjoy every Sunday night.

The results of advertising by distributing sample tubes of Picote did not warrant the relatively high cost of manufacturing, handling, and mailing the samples; so we now concentrate on magazine and radio-TV promotion. As a result, we have been able to make a substantial saving which we have passed on to the users of Picote by lowering the price of the product.

In addition to this price reduction, in January and February Rigate will offer an economy-size tube of Picote for just one additional penny with the purchase of a bottle of Rigaretine. The first time you drop by your drugstore in January, take advantage of the savings Rigate passes on to its users.

**The Buffer Beginning.** When the reader starts to read your refusal, he is hoping for pleasant news. He has probably done a good job of ferreting out those reasons why he thinks you should do as he has asked. The outright refusal presented immediately—because it appears to ignore his feelings and his reasoning—is likely to arouse a negative reaction and cause him to close his mind to anything else you say.

If you pitch right in with a presentation of your reasons, you appear to be arguing with him—and his dander, or at least his suspicion, rises.

To prevent mental impasses and emotional deadlocks, show your reader that you are a reasonable, calm person by indicating some form of approval of him or his project. This is your buffer. Frequently, you can agree completely with some statement made in his request. At the least, you can say something which will establish compatibility, even if it's nothing more than that you have given his proposal serious thought.

The turndown of the request for the correspondence manual (p. 104) could easily begin with

You are certainly right about the pressing need that is facing most business firms for more effectively trained business correspondents.

Or it could have started this way:

Students attending Harwood College are fortunate to have a faculty who try so conscientiously to correlate college training and business practice.

Both beginnings acknowledge the receipt of the request, clearly imply that the request has been considered, establish compatibility, and set the stage for the review of the facts resulting in the refusal later.

Three warnings should be sounded here, however. The first is that if you appear to be granting the request, you are building your reader up to an awful letdown! The resultant reaction undoubtedly arouses more negative feelings than the abrupt, unmotivated refusal. Such beginnings as these would mislead most readers:

I certainly would like to see each Harwood letter-writing student have access to a copy of the Southern Atlantic manual.

~~~~~  
“A” Day surely would be a good opportunity to acquaint potential customers with Picote toothpaste, Mr. Willet!

The second warning is against beginning so far away from the subject that the reader isn't even sure the letter is a reply to his request. The buffer beginning must clearly identify the general subject. Otherwise, incoherence and rambling are inevitable results. Even such a beginning as the following is irrelevant:

Your interesting letter describing "A" Day brought back to mind many pleasant memories of my own college days.

The job of getting to the facts would be harder with such a start.

Despite the fact that many writers advocate beginning refusals with  
I really wish we could . . . ,

we do not believe it can do as good a job for you as some other opening. It is stereotyped, it sounds insincere to many readers, and it invites the belligerent response of "Then why don't you?" But the greatest disadvantage (and the third warning) is that it establishes the refusal unmistakably in the opening line before showing any reason why.

**Reasons Rather than Apologies.** If you will apply the positive thinking and positive phrasing that we talked about under "Positive Statement" (p. 112) and "Success Consciousness" (p. 114), you will resist the common impulse to apologize anywhere in a refusal *and especially in the beginning*. Apologies are no substitute for action or explanation. And they inevitably force you to phrase in distinctively negative terminology the very idea that you should be avoiding, the fact that you *will not, cannot, are unable to, do not have*, and similar negative expressions.

You will, of course, run into some situations when there are no reasons (nonexistence of certain information or plain and simple unavailability) and some when the reason is so obvious that it need not be put into words.

But in most cases when you have to refuse, that refusal is based on policy. And back of that policy are good business reasons. Those reasons—not the policy—form the bedrock of your explanation. As much as possible, you will want to search out and emphasize those reasons which reflect benefit to the reader—if not directly, then indirectly by identification with a group with which the reader might be sympathetic. This, we will admit, is one of those things more easily said than done. But the writer of the Picote-sample-refusal letter did a good job of relating reader-benefit to his refusal. So did the man who had to tell a ten-year-old boy that a big mail-order house could not take the time to put commemorative stamps on packages sent to the boy's mother:

A stamp collection can certainly be fun, Tommy!

And commemorative stamps can teach you a lot about geography and people.

To get your mother's packages to her as quickly as she likes to get them, however, we use canceled stamps and postage-meter machines. They enable us to cut down on shipping time here at Glover's and help the men at the Post Office to save time, too. They also help us to reduce our expenses. Those are two good reasons why your mother likes to buy from Glover's and two good reasons why we use only these means for paying postage.

I'll bet you can get all the commemorative stamps you want for your collection if you'll just ask some of your relatives and friends to save them for you. Try it and see.

Did you see the big write-up about stamp collections in *Life* magazine June 24? You'd enjoy reading it and looking at all the pictures, I know.

The following letter from a manufacturer refusing a dealer's request for samples also stresses reader benefits:

Congratulations on the 25 years of service that you have given to your community!

Through continued association with retailers, we know that only those whose businesses are based on sound managerial policies and services succeed over so long a time.

We have tried to help in these successes by cutting costs whenever possible and passing these savings on to retailers in the form of lower prices. This aim led us to eliminate the high (and often unpredictable) manufacturing and shipping costs of special samples. You and hundreds of other druggists have benefited from these cost reductions for the past five years.

If you'll fill in and mail the enclosed card, Mr. Robert Abbott, your Walwhite representative, will be glad to arrange a special Walwhite exhibit for your anniversary sale. This attractive display will attract many customers.

Such reader-benefit interpretation cannot be applied in every case. To attempt to would result in artificial, insincere talk. The following letter refusing a request for permission to reprint some sales letters of a mail-order house would not likely offend even when stripped down to its fundamentally selfish message:

You can count on a large, interested readership for the article you are writing about the importance of sales letters in business.

In our company, as you know, we depend upon letters exclusively for sales. Of necessity, then, we have tested extensively to find out the most effective procedures. Our highly paid writers are continually revising, sending expensive test mailings, and comparing returns. The best letters represent a considerable investment.

In the past we have had some of our standard letters used without consent by rival companies; so we now copyright all our sales forms and confine them to company use. Should we release them for publication, we would have to incur the same expense once again, for their effectiveness for us would be materially decreased.

I'm sending you some bulletins and a bibliography which may help you with your article. Will you let me know the issue of the magazine your article appears in?

Even though the reasoning is frankly selfish, it is reasonable; and the writing is friendly and positive.

If you establish good reasons, you have no cause for apologizing.

**The Derived, Positive Refusal.** Ideally, as your reader reads your explanation he sees that it justifies you in refusing, and by the time he finishes the explanation he has inferred the turndown. Thus prepared, he is far more likely to accept your decision without ill feeling.

But you cannot always afford to depend exclusively on implication to establish the "No" unmistakably. You cannot take chances on your reader's misunderstanding. The refusal must be clearly established, but the statement of it need not be brutally negative; in fact, it need not be negative at all. If you will look back at the sample refusals in this section, you will see that the writers established the idea of what they were not doing by a statement of what they were doing. To establish the idea of "We don't distribute samples," one writer said, "So we now concentrate on magazine and radio-TV promotion." He might have expressed his idea more definitely with "We advertise exclusively through magazines and radio-television." Instead of saying, "We cannot let you have samples of our sales letters," another phrased it, "We copyright all our sales forms and confine them to company use." When you incorporate the limiting words *only*, *solely*, *exclusively* (even phrases like *confine to* and *concentrate on*), there's no room for doubt.

Saving some of your reasons until after establishing the definite refusal enables you to embed the disappointing news and thus, you hope, reduce the impact of the refusal. In any event, you certainly want to take leave of your reader on a more pleasant note than the refusal.

**The Pleasant, Hopeful Ending.** In some cases when you must refuse, you can do little but reassure the reader through a few additional words that you are not utterly callous—or even merely-indifferent. Good wishes for the success of the project, the suggestion of other sources, possibly the suggestion of being helpful in other ways, sending something other than what the reader has requested—all these are possibilities for ending your letter with a friendly gesture.

Sometimes you cannot comply with your reader's request but can

suggest an alternative action which will be of some help to him if he cares to follow your suggestion. Business writers call this a "counter-proposal" or a "compromise proposal." In many instances it can successfully absorb the statement of the refusal and furnish you with the positive ending you seek. The following letter is an example of this technique:

Prudential's employees and clients will no doubt benefit materially from the reports manual you are planning, Mr. Lee—especially if it is the same calibre as the letters manual your staff prepared recently.

I'm sure many college teachers would be glad to furnish you illustrative material. And I am no exception. In the past fifteen years of working with business and college people trying to improve the quality of their reports, I've collected much HOW NOT TO and HOW TO teaching material.

For most of this I have only my single file copy, which I use in teaching a report-writing course three times a year and which I carefully keep in my office.

Though I have no secretarial assistance, one of the students just finishing the course is an accurate, rapid typist who is familiar with the material. I'm sure she would like to do the necessary copying at her regular rate of seventy-five cents an hour. Since there are no more than fifty or sixty pages involved, I feel reasonably sure that securing the material this way would cost you no more than ten dollars, probably less.

I shall be glad to make the necessary arrangements if you would like me to. I'm sure I can have the material to you within four or five days after hearing from you.

Please note again that this writer does not resort to negative phrasing, nor does he mouth apologies. You, too, should resist the common tendency to resort to such expressions as "I regret, I assure you, my inability to do as you asked," "I'm sorry to have to refuse your request," or—much worst—"I hope you will understand our position," especially at the end. For these weaklings, substitute appropriate positive ideas such as those used in the examples in this section.

For writing good-will-building refusals, keep the reminder list of points on pages 642–43 in mind.

### **Acknowledgments of Incomplete or Indefinite Orders**

You would think that anybody could write an adequate order; but only one day's work in the order department of a big mail-order house would convince you that many people don't.

When you get an order that is incomplete (and therefore vague), you can either try to guess what the customer wants and thereby risk

extra costs and customer dissatisfaction, or you can write for the needed information. Usually you write.

Your real problem is to *keep the order*, instead of causing the customer to neglect your request for the information or to write you in disgust to cancel the order. Drawbacks to your success are the inevitable delay, the extra trouble to the customer, his embarrassment at having written a poor order, and (unless you are very careful) his irritation at the way you write to him about it. The big problem, then, is to avoid or overcome these negatives inherent in the situation.

Since it is a *bad-news* letter (because of the additional trouble and delay) you will wisely use a buffer. Resale, thanks, and (if a new customer) a hearty welcome are all good buffer material and need to come early in the letter. A problem here is to avoid misleading the customer into believing that you are sending what he ordered. Otherwise his disappointment, when he learns the facts, will be greater.

Very early—perhaps by starting to interweave some of it into the very first of the letter—you should stress the resale element. The more specific it is, the more emphatic it is. If you tell him he will like the product, also tell him specifically why you think so. By reassuring the customer that the product he ordered is good, resale will help to overcome the drawbacks. In this case it has a much more important role than in the standard acknowledgment. Though small bits of it may be scattered throughout the letter, at least some of it comes before the reader learns the bad news—to bolster his original desire in his moment of disappointment. It can be very short:

Fashion-conscious women everywhere are wearing Ban-lon sweaters like the one you ordered.

When you have thus prepared the reader psychologically, you should let him know the bad news by asking for the needed information. Thus you save words, weaken the bad news by putting the reader's main attention on complying with your request, and avoid any good-will-killing accusations. More specifically, your technique at this important crux of the letter is: In one key sentence beginning with a reader-benefit reason for your request, ask for the information. For example:

So that we may be sure to send you just the sweater that will suit you best, will you please specify your color choice?

Now, if you add a touch of satisfaction-resale to motivate the requested action, provide an easy way to answer (to overcome the extra trouble), and promise speed (to overcome as much as possible of the delay), you'll probably get the information you want . . . without ruffling your reader's feathers:

Coming in four subtle shades of harvest brown, lettuce green, tile red, and sky blue, Ban-lon sweaters provide you a pleasant color to match any complexion or ensemble.

If you'll just use the handy return card, you'll be enjoying the sweater of your choice within two days after we receive it.

Notice that, though they treat an inherently bad-news situation, nowhere in the four paragraphs of this letter is there any negative expression ("delay," "inconvenience," "incomplete," "regret," "sorry"). Most of all, the acknowledgment does not irritate by accusing with such expressions as "you neglected," "you forgot," or "you failed."

Though we have never seen a letter just like the following, others we have seen lead us to believe that some people would actually write:

We have your order for two Ban-lon sweaters, but you forgot to tell the color. We are merchants and not mind readers. If you will please be so kind as to tell us the color you neglected to name in your first letter, we'll try to get them to you.

The following letter illustrates good technique for an acknowledgment when you can fill part of the order but have to get omitted information about another part. If you want to consider it as a simple acknowledgment of an incomplete order, however, you can read it without the first paragraph and the phrase "the file and" in the next-to-last paragraph.

Soon after you get this letter you should receive the very protective locking and fire-resistant Shaw-Walker file you ordered October 2. It is to go out on our Meridian delivery tomorrow.

The sturdy but light Model 94 Royal Standard typewriter you specified is our most popular one this year, perhaps because of its wide adaptability. Readily available in two type sizes and six type styles, it is suitable to all kinds of work and to various typists' tastes.

To be sure of getting the size and style you like best, please check your choices on the enclosed card of illustrations and return it.

Though your letter was written in Executive style elite (12 letters to the inch), you may prefer the more legible Professional style pica (10 letters to the inch) if you are buying for your reporters. It is the most widely used in newspaper work.

All prices are the same—except \$10 extra for the modish Script style, which you probably will not want—and your check exactly covers the file and the three typewriters you ordered in any other choice.

By returning the card with your choices of type size and style right away, you can have your three new Royals Friday, ready for years

of carefree typing. We'll send them out on the next delivery after we hear from you.

For requesting additional information in business-building fashion, apply the suggestions in the appended check list for incomplete orders (p. 650).

### Delays and Back-Ordering

Sometimes the problem in an acknowledgment is that you can't send the goods right away. In the absence of a specified time limit, sellers-by-mail usually try to keep the order on the books if they feel that they can fill it within a time that is really a service to the customer—that is, if they feel that the customer would prefer to wait rather than cancel the order. After a buffer, they tell when they expect to fill the order and usually assume (without asking) that to be acceptable. If the date is so far off that doubt arises as to whether it will be acceptable, they may ask instead of assuming. In either case, the wise businessman will acknowledge the order promptly.

Again your main problem is keeping the order. This time, though, the only drawback to overcome is delay. Again your main element is resale—to convince the reader that he wants the product enough to wait. It may include both resale on the house and on the goods. If the order is the customer's first, resale is even more important and more extensive.

The plan and technique are the same as for the acknowledgment of an incomplete order, at least through the first paragraph and some resale talk.

Your order 5B631 of April 7 for Tropical brand play suits in the new Wancrest Glachine material is another reflection of your astute buying. From all indications they will be *the* prevailing style this season.

The parting of the ways comes where the one asks for information and the other explains the situation. The explanation should picture the goods on their way (and imply receipt of them) in the first part of a sentence which ends with clear indication that that does not mean now (usually by giving the shipping date).

By making every effort to get your supply to you before spring, when your customers will start calling for these popular play suits, we are able to promise you a shipment by April 27.

As always in letter writing, it is better to explain in positive terms what you can do, have done, and will do than to tell in negative terms what you can't do, haven't done, or won't do. A good letter writer will avoid such unnecessary negatives as "out of stock," "cannot send," "temporarily depleted," "will be unable to," "do not

have," and "can't send until," as the writer of the preceding paragraph did.

Only a poor businessman is caught short without a justifying reason satisfactory to the reader. When he is, he will be better off to admit it frankly than to give some weak or false excuse. A good businessman will have a reason. He should explain it to his customer, to avoid the impression that he is inefficient. Often it is basically strong resale material if properly interpreted. For example:

The Wancrest people have assured us that, although we're insisting on the top-quality material which has made these play suits so attractive to store buyers, they can catch up to our recent order and have a new shipment to us by the 21st. Thus we can promise yours by the 27th.

More resale may follow the explanation to make the reader want the product badly enough to wait. Because it has such an important job to do, it is probably more important in the back-order acknowledgment than in any other. It should be short, specific, and adapted to carry its full effect. It may include both resale on the house and on the goods. Since so much of both kinds has already appeared in the letter we're developing here, however, more hardly seems appropriate.

The ending of the back-order acknowledgment may be worded either one of two ways:

1. You may ask outright whether it will be satisfactory to fill the order when you have said you can. This plan is preferable if you seriously doubt that the customer will approve.
2. You may phrase it so that this letter will complete the contract unless the reader takes the initiative and writes back a cancellation. That is, you look forward with success consciousness to filling the order when you have said you can. You assume that your plan is acceptable unless and until you learn otherwise. Your assumption will hold more frequently if you never suggest the thing you don't want your reader to do—cancel.

The following letter illustrates the handling of a back-order problem:

You will be glad to know that the women's play suits you ordered April 7—

4 Dozen—Style #16J7 Women's Play Suits 1 dozen each in sizes 12, 14, 16, and 18, in full color assortments, @ \$19.50 a dozen, terms 2/10, n/30.

—are leading the summer sportswear sales of more than four hundred of our customers from Maine to California.

We are increasing production on this model and have booked your play suits for rush shipment April 27 by air express.

The unusual pre-season popularity of this trimly cut play suit suit owes much to the shimmering Wancrest Glachine fabric of which it is made. When we used up our stock of this genuine combed cotton and acetate rayon material, rather than use a substitute we shut down production of this model. A large stock of Glachine fabric is already en route here from Wancrest's famous North Carolina mills; thus we are able to promise your shipment by April 27.

For this chance to prove once again Tropical's continuing fashion superiority, we thank you sincerely.

Much of the back-order acknowledgment technique is the same as that used in standard and incomplete-order acknowledgments. The appended checked list for back-order acknowledgments points out the similarities and additional considerations (p. 644).

### Acknowledgments Declining Orders

There are only three likely reasons why you would decline an order:

1. The customer has asked for credit, and you are not willing to sell to him that way. In that case the problem is a credit problem and is discussed on pp. 236-40.
2. You don't have the goods (or a suitable substitute), and you don't expect to get them in time to serve the customer. You then simply thank him, explain the situation, tell him where he can get the goods (if you know), maybe present resale on the house and sales-promotion material on any other goods which seem likely to interest him, and end appropriately.
3. You don't market your products in the way he has proposed. Most of these problems arise because of one of the following two situations: (1) the orderer is an unacceptable dealer; or (2) you sell only through regular merchandising channels, and he does not propose to go through those channels.

Declining because you don't have the goods is well illustrated by the following letter from an orange grower to a former customer:

Thank you for your recent and additional order for one bushel of navel oranges.

Although this valley is known as the land "where sunshine spends the winter," a heavy snowstorm and freeze during the latter part of January caused extensive damage to our current fruit crop. Some of the fruit looks and tastes good, but we do not trust it to keep more than a week after it has been picked.

Since one of the qualities you have a right to expect in fresh fruit is its ability to keep and since we are unwilling to risk the chance that you might be disappointed, we are returning your check for the one bushel of oranges.

The damage to our trees is only temporary. We are looking forward to another crop of high-quality fruits next year. May we serve you again next season with some of our choice fruits?

**Unacceptable Dealer.** A dealer may be unacceptable because (1) you sell only through exclusive dealerships and you already have a dealer in his territory or (2) because he does not meet your requirements for a dealership. For example, some manufacturers will sell only to those who propose to follow standard Fair-Trade practices.

The first part of the declining letter would be the same in each case and (except for the omission of resale) the same as the beginning of other bad-news acknowledgments we have discussed. In the first case, your explanation would be how you operate and why you operate that way plus the simple fact of the existing dealership. In the second case, it would be a simple explanation of your requirements, with justifying reasons. The ending for the one would be a purely good-will ending of "keeping him in mind" in case you should later want him as a dealer. The other would end with an offer to reconsider if a change or additional information shows that he does meet the requirements.

**Improper Channels.** Some buyers think that all manufacturers or producers should sell to anybody who has the money and omit the middle men who add so much to the cost of goods. Those who howl the loudest on that point also howl the loudest when a producer from afar does not make his goods available in the local stores. There are advantages and disadvantages in both methods of merchandising. Which is the more desirable is a question we need not answer. We must grant, however, that a producer has the right to sell his goods the way he wants to. And whatever his plan, he has, no doubt, chosen it for certain reasons. At least some of them should be in terms of how he can best serve his customers.

Assuming that the firm for which you work has taken the customer-service attitude into account when adopting its merchandising plan, you are in a good position to acknowledge the order of a person who does not (through ignorance or intent) choose to follow your plan. Usually he will be a consumer asking for goods from a wholesaler or producer instead of through the regular retail channel. Some of the customer-service reasons you can point out to him for selling only through local retail stores are the advantage of being able to get goods quickly from local stores; of being able to see, feel, and try them; of being able to get adjustments and service easier—indeed, all the disadvantages a seller-by-mail usually has to overcome are now in your favor.

Your bad-news letter begins in the same way as those acknowledging incomplete orders and orders that you cannot fill immediately:

with a buffer, including resale to help keep the customer interested in the goods (on which you *do* make a profit, of course). As before, you are careful not to mislead.

After that beginning, you explain how you merchandise your goods (not how you don't, except by implication) and why you operate that way. As far as possible, you explain the why in terms of benefit to the customer (you-viewpoint). He will not be much impressed by the benefits to you. At least a part of the reader-benefit *why* should come before the part of the explanation which conveys the bad news (by implication) that he can't buy that way, that his order is not being filled.

If your explanation is good, he will agree that that's the best way for him. If your resale talk has been good, he will still want the product, though he can't buy it from you. He will still want to know how he can get it. You tell him exactly how and where, and you give him a last touch of resale to make him place his order the way you suggest.

If you have several equally convenient outlets, you name them all to give him a choice and to be fair to all. This letter follows the directions:

Karsol shower curtains like the ones you saw advertised will give you the wear you want for rental units.

So that you will be able to select personally the exact patterns which you prefer (from eight different designs offered), we have set up a marketing plan of bringing Karsol shower curtains to you through local dealers only. This way you will save handling, shipping, and C.O.D. charges. You will be able to get your curtains at the White House, located at 300 Main Street in Montgomery, thus speeding your purchases and avoiding unnecessary delays ever present when ordering by mail.

We have recently sent a large shipment of Karsol shower curtains to your local retail store; and you will be able to see for yourself that although these water-proof curtains are of exceptional strength and durability, they are soft and pliable.

Stop by the White House next time you are in town and select your favorite pattern of Karsol shower curtains that will satisfy your tenants.

If you are really a good businessman, you notify the retailers, so that they can write or call the interested prospect if he doesn't come in.

### Selling a Substitute

Many times you will receive orders which you can't fill exactly because you do not have the special brand, but you have a competing brand or something else that will render the service the customer

obviously wanted. You know that in most cases people do not buy a product for the name on it but for the service they expect from it. If you think your brand will serve (and ordinarily you do or you wouldn't be selling it), you remember your service attitude and try to satisfy the orderer's wants. As a point of business ethics, you should not try to sell a substitute unless you sincerely believe that you can truly serve by saving the customer time and trouble in getting what he wants or by giving him service at least comparable to what he can get elsewhere in terms of cost.

Once you decide that you are ethically (not selfishly) justified in selling the substitute, you need to remember several working principles:

1. Don't call it a substitute. Though many substitutes are superior to the things they replace, the word has undesirable connotations that work against you. Burma Shave uses the connotations effectively in a roadside advertisement reading "Substitutes and imitations—give them to your wife's relations. Burma Shave."
2. Don't belittle the competitor's product. Not only is that questionable ethics, but it criticizes the orderer's judgment—after all, he wanted to buy that product.
3. Don't refer to the ordered product specifically by name any more than you have to—perhaps not at all. Certainly, once should be enough. You want him to forget it and think about yours. When you use its name, you remind him of it—in effect, you advertise it. Conversely, stress your product, perhaps repeating the exact name several times.

Except for the fact that the identification and resale are in general terms broad enough to encompass both the product ordered and the substitute, and show their basic similarity, your beginning of the substitute-selling acknowledgment is the same as those other buffers for bad-news acknowledgments. If you phrase the beginning well, you'll have no trouble making a smooth transition to further talk about the substitute.

Your repeat order of September 10 for sixty regular-duty batteries suggests that you have found your battery business quite profitable. We're glad to hear it, but we think we can show you how you can do even better in the coming season.

You arrange to introduce the substitute and at least one of its sales points *before* revealing that you can't send what was ordered. You need to convey this negative message fairly early, however, to keep the reader from wondering why all the talk about the substitute. Your best technique is the standard one for subordinating negative messages: Tell what you *can* do in a way that clearly implies what you can't.

## 226      COMMUNICATING THROUGH LETTERS AND REPORTS

In our continuous effort to find the best automobile accessories and equipment at reasonable prices, we have found that the new Acme battery excels others of its price class in power, endurance at full load, and resistance to cracking. Because of those desirable qualities, we decided two months ago to stock the Acme line exclusively. Though Powell of Dayton still has the Motor King, we think your customers will be ahead in service and you'll make more profits with the Acme.

Once you are over that rough spot, clear sailing lies ahead. You continue your sales talk, concentrating on why you carry the substitute and what it will do for your reader, not on why you do not carry what he ordered. You give a complete, specific description of the substitute's good points in terms of consumer or dealer benefits (as the case may be).

A good test of the adequacy of your sales talk is whether it is all *you* would want to know if you were being asked to change your mind about the two products.

Because of its 115 amp. power and its endurance of 5.9 minutes at full load, your customers will like the fact that the Acme keeps a hard-to-start engine spinning vigorously and increases the chance of starting. They'll also like the tough new plastic case that avoids the cracking and loss of acid sometimes experienced with hard-rubber cases.

Sometimes your price will be higher than that of the product ordered. If so, presumably you think your product is better. Your method of meeting the price competition, then, is to sell the advantages and then point to them as justifying the price. Prices seem less, too, if you put them in terms of small units. You may hear the price of something announced as only 3 cents a day, for example, instead of \$11 a year.

When you explain these advantages the Acme has over its competitors, you justify at least a \$2 higher price in the customer's mind—and you produce a prompt purchase. The Acme battery will back you up, too, in the customer's long experience with it. It carries the usual 24-month pro-rata replacement guarantee. And the fact that it wholesales to you at only \$1 more, means an extra \$1 profit to you on each sale.

Sometimes you will have to admit (tacitly) that your product is inferior but adequate. Your technique, then, is to sell its adequacy and the fact that it is a good buy because of the price. If the customer had ordered a higher-priced battery than you now sell, for example, you could replace the three preceding paragraphs with these:

In our continuous effort to find the best automobile accessories and equipment at reasonable prices, we have found that the Motor King

is a leading seller. Because of its low price, strong customer appeal, and complete range of sizes, we now offer only the Motor King for all cars. The fact that you could fit *any* car would give you a big advantage over competitors selling brands that come in only a few sizes.

The \$2 saving you can offer on the Motor King will have a strong appeal to many of your customers who are unwilling to pay higher prices for more than standard specifications for regular-duty batteries: 105 amps., 48 plates, 5.3 minutes' endurance at full load. The Motor King meets those specifications, and it carries the standard 24-month pro-rata replacement guarantee.

And while your customers would be saving, we estimate that you would be making more profits because of increased volume that would almost certainly come from a complete line at favorable prices.

Usually, however, quality and price are about the same, and you simply sell the product on its merits and as a service or convenience because it is available.

When your selling job is done, you are ready to try to get action. You can do either of two things:

1. You can ask the orderer whether you may fill his order with the substitute, or ask him to fill out a new order specifying it; or
2. You can send the goods and give the orderer the option of returning them entirely at your expense—that is, you pay transportation both ways. Thus no question of ethics arises.

The second way will sell more goods if you word the offer carefully to avoid a sound of high-pressuring. You should use it, however, only in an attempt to give the best service you can. You should make this choice if he indicated pressing need, if you are reasonably sure he will accept, and if the transportation costs are small. If you do send the goods on option, you can greatly affect your chance of having them accepted by the wording of your offer. Note the difference between these two ways:

- a) We believe you will find the Acmes satisfactory. Therefore, we are filling your order with them. If you don't like them, just return them to us collect.
- b) Because we are so thoroughly convinced that you will like the Acmes, we are filling your order with them, on trial. When you see how they sell and satisfy your customers, we believe you will want to keep the whole shipment and order more.

The second puts the emphasis on his accepting them, where it should be; the first on his returning them. The second way will sell more goods.

Whether your acknowledgment letter selling a substitute asks approval or explains that you are sending the goods on trial, you should merely ask or suggest the action and make it convenient. A last touch of resale may be added, but action should not be urged—certainly not commanded. This type of letter has the onus of suspicion on it from the outset. High pressure is out of place anywhere in it, especially in the end. Here's a good substitute letter:

Your request for another Simpson product shows that you have been well satisfied with these high-quality electrical supplies. One of the reasons we've been able to please you is the practice of introducing new and improved products first.

Our latest electric fan featuring the newest improvements is the Matthews. Because of the new style oscillating gear, this new fan delivers 12% more cubic feet of air per minute than any other fan of similar size. A crackle finish looks new longer because it resists scuffs and scratches.

Since the demand is rapidly growing for the improved Matthews, we now stock it exclusively. You may still be able to buy the Seabreeze from Gardner, Perkins, and Simons in Cleveland. We believe you'll prefer the Matthews, however.

In addition to the standard 10-inch Matthews priced at \$10.83 a fan and the large 12-inch at \$14.16 a fan, with the Matthews line of fans you can also offer a new model, the Matthews Midget. This is an 8-inch fan priced at only \$7.08. The Midget has all the new improvements found on the larger fans. Like all Matthews fans, the Midget also carries a one-year guarantee.

To order, simply fill out the enclosed card and mail it. We will ship your Matthews fans by freight collect. When you see how well the Matthews fan sells, you will fully realize that you made a sound buy.

The check list for selling substitutes (pp. 646–47) summarizes the points you'll want to observe in writing successful letters of the type.

## Combinations

In acknowledging orders, you will often find one for several items, some of which you have and others of which you don't. To answer such an order, you have to combine the principles discussed for different types of acknowledgments. The writer of the following letter to a new customer had to combine several types because he could send one item immediately, he had to delay another shipment, he couldn't provide another item, and he had to substitute for still another:

Your two dozen 7.50 × 15 Firestone tires are already on their way to you. They should arrive by Motor-Van truck Thursday, ready for your weekend customers.

It is always a pleasure to welcome a new customer to our long list of dealers who look to us for automobile supplies. We shall always try to serve your needs as best we can, by keeping up with the market and providing you with the best goods available.

The  $8.50 \times 14$  tires are a case in point. In another effort to assure our customers of the advertised quality of all products we handle, we returned to the manufacturer the last shipment of  $8.50 \times 14$  Firestone tires because they had been slightly bruised in an accident while the tires were being shipped to us. Since we are assured of a new shipment in two weeks, may we fill this part of your order then?

In trying to keep our operating costs and consequently our prices at a minimum, we have discontinued handling  $4.50 \times 21$  tires because of the small demand for them. Probably your best source for them is the Kimble Supply Company, 401 S. State Street, Chicago, which carries a large stock of obsolete auto parts and supplies.

When our buyer was in the market last year, he found a new automobile paint that seemed superior to other paints he knew. It is a General Motors product in all colors, with the standard General Motors guarantee. Our other customers have been so well satisfied with its quality and price (only \$2.85 a qt. and \$9.85 a gallon) that we now stock it exclusively. As I feel sure that you too will be satisfied with this new product, I am filling your order with the understanding that you can return the paint at our expense unless it completely satisfies. I think you will like it.

Since I am awaiting the return of the enclosed card with your decision on the paint (sent with your  $7.50 \times 15$  tires) and the  $8.50 \times 14$  tires to be sent in two weeks, I am holding your check to see how much the refund is to be.

For your convenience and information, I am sending a separate parcel of our latest catalogue and a supply of order blanks. We shall be glad to handle your future orders for high-quality automobile supplies.

Note how that letter would have read if the order had been for only the paint. Read only the second, fifth, and seventh paragraphs.

### Refusing the Adjustment

The letter refusing an adjustment is obviously a bad-news (B-plan) letter. Your psychology of saying "No" is therefore important. So, unless you thoroughly understand it, read the explanation beginning on page 103.

For your buffer-paragraph beginning, you look for something in the situation which you and the reader agree on and which is pleasant to him. Even though you are going to disagree on the big point and refuse him, you will usually agree with some of the things he has said in his claim. The appreciation for the information could be

used in most cases. You can certainly agree that he was right to come to you.

The dangers to avoid in writing the buffer are:

1. Stating or implying refusal before reasons ("We wish we could").
2. Misleading your reader into thinking that you are going to grant the adjustment ("Our policy of making fair adjustments").
3. Talking irrelevantly or too far off the subject.
4. Recalling the disappointment too vividly ("We regret your dissatisfaction").
5. Making it too short to get in step or too long to suit an impatient claimant.
6. Making an awkward transition to the next part because the buffer is not well phrased.

Though you may introduce a sentence that serves as a transition and as resale on the house, you need to get to your explanation or review of facts and reasons fairly early. And you need to give the facts and reasons fully in a clear system of organization.

Again the explanation is the major part of the letter. There are several special techniques important in it if it is to rebuild good will while refusing to do what the reader asked. You already know better than to hide behind the word *policy* or to give no reason at all. The reader expects one, and a reasonable and clear one. A flat-footed announcement of what the guarantee states is just as bad as unsupported talk about policy. Since you are refusing, clearly you are not charging responsibility for the dissatisfaction to either the firm or the product. You must clear that point up with adequate explanation as a basis for refusing. That, of course, makes the reader guilty; but you don't want to accuse him directly. Preaching to him or belittling him will only make matters worse. Your best technique is to fall back on the impersonal presentation (something "was not done" instead of "you didn't"), rather than accuse. The reader will be able to see who is responsible if you explain well that your goods and your firm aren't.

In fact, if your reasons and explanations are carefully arranged, they will probably make the negative answer clear by implication without the necessity of stating it. Thus you may subordinate the negative refusal. If not this way, at least you subordinate by burying it (that is, putting it in the middle of a paragraph where it doesn't stand out unduly).

After the refusal, which must be clearly there whether by implication or by direct statement, you may do well to add some more reasoning and explanation in support. Be sure there is enough to make your refusal convincing and justified.

Your ending, then, becomes an attempt to get agreement or the reader's acceptance of your refusal as justified. That is, you write with

as much success consciousness as seems reasonable about the future outlook. This does NOT mean that you write and ask for an answer as to whether your action is all right. If it isn't, he'll let you know without your asking. Often the best ending assumes that the preceding explanation and decision are satisfactory and talks about something else. Rather than look backward, it may better look forward to the next likely relationship between writer and reader. The following letter illustrates most of the points, especially the clear reasoning that makes direct refusal unnecessary:

We certainly agree with you that your company has always ordered high-quality products to sell to your customers. We, too, try to keep our products up to a high standard.

That is why we appreciate your fairness in giving us a chance to analyze the sample of screws you sent.

Our chemical analysis shows that the screws are brittle because they are high in phosphorous and low in carbon and sulphur steel, whereas our screws are of a very different analysis. Physical analysis shows that the sample screws have been severely cold-worked without stress relief, whereas our screws are never made that way.

To check our laboratory report, which practically proved that we could not have made those screws, I have checked your former orders and found that the screws we have sent you were always blue steel finish, instead of the cadmium finish of the sample.

We should be glad to supply you again with our hard but tough screws that will give your customers the quality they have come to expect from you. Our descriptive price list is enclosed. May we look forward to your order?

For a more subtle illustration, analyze the following letter to a customer who had taken his suit to another tailor in another city and asked for payment of the tailor's bill long after the usual free-alteration period ended. (The owner-manager knew all of his student customers fairly well.)

You're right!—your Smart Marx should fit you well. When you buy a suit of that quality from us, we try as hard as you do to see that you are satisfied in every way before we turn it over to you with our blessings.

I well remember how you liked the rich sheen of the tan 100 per cent wool cloth and the casual look of the patch pockets. But for comfort and becoming fit, we decided that the sleeves should be a half-inch longer and the collar taken up an inch—the same directions that are on the sales slip and the alterations slip which I have on my desk right now, and which bear the initials of one of our tailors and my own. When you came back in the next day and tried the coat on, I honestly thought that it clicked all the way around; and, after

carefully noting it from every angle, you agreed with me. I thought we had achieved our goal—your satisfaction.

But we owe you something else: the best quality at the lowest price possible. And one of the small economies that helps to keep the price of your suit lower is that it does not include costs of altering suits for men who have become twenty pounds heavier or lighter. In order to protect all Smart Marx buyers, we limit free alterations to two weeks after purchase, thus giving the wearer ample time to become accustomed to the feel of his new suit and take advantage of the free-alterations privilege if he cares to.

After that time we're glad to make necessary alterations at regular tailors' rates to readjust Smart Marx suits to a wearer's changes in weight that sometimes come during the long life of such good suits.

Since you'll probably want to wear your suit well into the coming season, you might enjoy a pair of the Floorshine shoes we've just received. In russet calfskin they're good for all-around wear. May we show you this style when you return to school early next month?

The appended check list (p. 648) will review the highlights of refusing adjustments.

### **Compromising on the Adjustment**

When you decide to try to compromise—usually because of divided responsibility, or uncertainty about responsibility or correction for the trouble—you may use either of two plans.

In the first you follow the refused-adjustment plan exactly down to the refusal. There you make your proposed compromise instead, explicitly. In effect, you are refusing the adjustment requested and are making a counterproposal—a compromise. When you ask acceptance of it, your success in getting a favorable reply will depend not only on how well you have presented facts and reasons to justify the compromise but on your success consciousness in presenting it and on your phrasing it to encourage rather than discourage acceptance.

The following letter in answer to a strong request for removal of the heater, cancellation of remaining payments, and refund of the shipping and installation charges illustrates the points. You will notice that it offers to compromise to the extent of cancelling the remaining payments, but it proposes another action instead.

You are right in expecting your Warmall Heater to heat a large room such as your entire store, for that was what it was designed to do.

To do so, however, it must be located so that the air currents can carry its heat to all parts of the room. Our engineer reports that the stove was installed in the proper position but that later remodeling of your store has blocked circulation of air with a half partition.

It would be useless to remove your stove, which can be all you want it to be when properly located. That would mean losing what you have paid for shipping and installation, though we would, of course, cancel the remaining payments. Moreover, you must have heat; and the Warmall will do the job.

We have absolute faith in our engineer's judgment, but your satisfaction is more important. So we want to do what is fair to us both.

At your convenience we can move the stove to the position suggested by our engineer; and if it does not heat to your satisfaction, we will not charge you a cent.

Will you suggest the most convenient time for the change that will make your store warm and comfortable? We can do the job so quickly and efficiently that your business can continue as usual.

A second method of compromising—usually called the Full-Reparation Beginning Compromise—sometimes works better. You follow the plan of the letter granting an adjustment at the beginning, through the explanation. The facts, of course, will indicate divided responsibility or uncertain responsibility. Your resale talk will indicate that the repaired product (or a replacement up to par, in case the original was beyond repair) will give the service the customer wanted. Since he presumably still wants that service, you ask him to take his choice—the refunded money or the product. And, of course, you word it to encourage him to choose the product, because that way you have a customer satisfied with your products as well as your fair-minded practices.

Your main purpose is to restore good will and confidence. Your success depends on a start which offers him all he requested and thereby pleases him, your explanation that shows the justice of a compromise, and your fair-mindedness in letting him be the judge and take his choice. The danger—not a very serious one—is that some people might try to keep both the money and the product. And, of course, you have to be willing to accept his choice if he decides on full adjustment. Here are two examples, one to a consumer and one to a dealer.

The enclosed check is cheerful proof of our "Money back if not entirely satisfied" guarantee on the Corone cigarette lighter you purchased last December.

Because such a guarantee can be given only on a lighter that will entirely satisfy you, we examined yours very carefully in our Service Department. The shop foreman reports that the sparking ridges on the flint wheel were clogged to a smooth surface with flake particles from a soft flint. After he cleaned the wheel and installed a Corone Hard Flint—the type recommended on the instructions enclosed with each new lighter—your Corone worked well.

You probably remember, Mr. Lewis, that one flick brought an instant flame before the hard flint wore out and was replaced. Now that your lighter has been returned to that condition, and still has the attractive styling that caught your eye the day you bought it, you'll probably want it back.

We will be glad to absorb the normal sixty cents cleaning charge and return your lighter to you if you wish. Just send the check back in the enclosed envelope, and your lighter will be in your pocket within two days after we hear from you—ready at a flick to show your friend in Jackson that your Corone really does the job.

Attached to this letter is a credit memorandum for \$43.75, which we cheerfully send you for the five Bear Mountain hunting jackets you returned, and as an indication that you'll always be treated fairly at Bowen's.

Under the assumption that these jackets would find a ready sale at a reduced retail price despite slight imperfections (a button mismatched, a crooked seam, or maybe a little nick in the fabric), we offered them "as is" and priced them at \$8.75 instead of the regular \$12.75. We felt that marking them "as is" indicated special circumstances.

Generally we follow the accepted business custom of making all such sales final for an entire lot. But as you are a customer of long standing and valued patronage [*Better*: But as we evidently did not make the situation perfectly clear], we are leaving the decision up to you; if you feel that you're entitled to the adjustment, it's yours.

Many of your customers, however, would probably be glad to get nationally advertised Bear Mountains at perhaps \$21 instead of the standard \$25. And even if you sell these five at, say, only \$16, your profit will be about the same as if you sold perfect jackets at full price. So if you'd like to reconsider, and want to offer these jackets at a saving, just initial the face of this letter and send it to us with the credit memo. We'll absorb the freight charges.

Even though slightly imperfect, these jackets are still ready to stand a lot of hard wear. They are made to suit the hunter's needs with ample pockets for shells and with comfortable tailoring. Selling them should be easy, especially at a discount. We'll look for your decision, but we think you can make a good profit on them at the special price.

Application of the appended check list for full-reparation beginning compromises (p. 651) to those two letters will show that they are pretty good and will review the principles for you.

### Requests for Credit Information from Customers

Many applications for credit do not give all the information which you as a credit man feel you must have before coming to a decision.

You write, therefore, directly to the customer, asking him to supply you with the information. The major problem in handling such requests is to avoid arousing the customer's suspicion or in some instances even his indignation or anger. To soften the effect of the delay and to quell the possible suspicion, you write a B-plan letter which begins with some pleasant buffer material, stresses benefits to him from complying with the request, shows him that he's being treated as all other customers are, makes action easy, and promises quick action. The following letter to a housewife is typical in stressing "All our customers fill out this application . . ."; it is an appropriate covering letter for the form request discussed on page 145.

It is a pleasure to know that you want to take advantage of the conveniences of an Allen Tilby charge account, Mrs. Lee.

So that we may assist you as quickly and as easily as possible, will you please fill out the routine credit application which is enclosed? All our customers fill out this application as a help to both them and us. The information is strictly for our confidential files.

You can be sure that we will give your application our immediate attention as soon as we receive it. A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning the application.

A letter to a dealer employs the same strategy:

Corone fishing gear is a good line to handle. Dealers throughout the country report favorable reaction of fishermen. And our advertising in *Field and Stream*, *Sports Afield*, and *True* continues to create demand for Corone dealers.

We're just as eager as you are to have your Corone sales start; so will you supply the usual financial information that all our dealers furnish us, along with the names of other firms from which you buy on credit? Most of our dealers use the enclosed form, but if you prefer to use your own, please do. This confidential information will enable us to serve you efficiently—now and in the future.

Occasionally such a request backfires, with a protest from the customer (sometimes quite vigorous!). In such cases all you can do is write again, using a pacifying buffer, then pointing out the value of credit and the necessity for careful selection of credit customers. The letter reiterates the normalcy of the request and closes with a request for action. It is also a modification of the B-plan letter, as in this example:

We're glad you let us know unmistakably how you feel about sending financial information concerning your business. And we're sure that as an open-minded businessman you'll want to look at your supplier's side of the story. Only through complete frankness can a dealer like you and a supplier like us work together successfully in a credit relationship.

We have some pretty definite ideas too—ideas which are the results of selling about 2,000 successful dealers like you several million dollars' worth of Corone fishing equipment in the last 20 years . . . about 90 per cent of it on credit.

Because of our credit arrangements, Corone dealers can do a large amount of business on a small investment. In effect, we take the place of your banker, for the goods we send you on credit are the same as cash. And we don't ask for payment for thirty days. Like your banker, we can make loans only when we have evidence of ability and willingness to pay later. The only way we can protect all our dealers against price rises due to losses from bad debts is to examine the financial statements of every credit applicant and to secure statements from his references. If you applied for a loan at your bank, you'd expect to show your financial statement to your banker. We are in the same position as he—except that we have no mortgage to protect us, and we are not so well informed as he is about you and your local market.

The confidential information we've asked you for is strictly for business purposes. It helps both of us. Since the peak sales months are close at hand, I'm enclosing another form and an addressed envelope with a special delivery stamp so that you can get this information back to us in time for us to get your fast-selling Corone fishing gear started to you by the first of next week.

### Credit Refusals

In the light of unfavorable reports from references or unfavorable financial position as shown in the applicant's statements, your job will sometimes necessitate refusing credit outright or suggesting some modification of the arrangement the customer has requested. In the case of an old customer, it may be a refusal of a credit-limit revision or a suggestion of curtailed buying. All these situations are inherently disappointing; they are a reflection on the ability of the customer; they *may be* interpreted as a reflection on his honesty; and so they are fraught with negative possibilities.

As in any disappointing-news letter, you need to analyze the situation, search out the hopeful elements, line up your reasons, and write a B-plan letter.

As in any refusal, you have to have a reason. The applicant may be too slow in meeting obligations, his receivables or payables may be out of line, or he may be undercapitalized. Whatever the reason, you have to establish it; and in this function you have some educational work to do—without offense, if at all possible.

You certainly do not want to close the door irrevocably on any debtor. A poor account at the time of writing may be a good one a year from then (and if your wise counseling has helped in the im-

provement, you have established yourself favorably in the eyes of the customer and are thus more likely to receive his business). For that reason, most credit refusals follow a presentation that establishes good feeling in a short buffer, establishes the reasons in an analysis of the circumstances, identifies the deficiency, refuses in positive fashion, suggests how the customer can remedy the deficiency, and invites a later application. If possible, the letter may make a counterproposal and point out its advantages, then ask for action on that basis. The usual ending is an attempt to sell for cash.

In the following instance, involving an order for \$176 worth of workmen's overalls, the dealer quickly responded with a financial statement and references in response to the request for them. Accounts receivable and payable were both too large; the trade-association reports offered the explanation that strikes in the mines of the dealer's community affected all local trade. Since the references reported that the customer's payments were good enough during normal times, the credit man sought to cultivate potential business while declining the account at present:

Your large order for Stalwart overalls suggests the prospects of an early strike settlement in your area. We're glad to hear that. When the miners go back to work, sales in and around Canyon City will rise to a normal level.

A steady revival of business will no doubt help your collections so that both your accounts receivable and accounts payable can be reduced. In that way you can probably quickly restore your current ratio to the healthy 2:1 that we require, since we've found over the years that such a ratio places no burden on our customers. Such an improvement will enable us to consider your credit application favorably. Will you please send us subsequent statements?

You'll probably need your Stalwart overalls sooner than that time, however; they're a popular brand because they wear well. Workmen like the reinforced pockets and knees. They'll easily outsell other lines you might carry.

You can stock this popular brand and thus take advantage of present demand by paying cash and taking advantage of the liberal discount that we can give you (on this order, for instance, the discount would amount to \$3.52—more than enough to pay interest for six months on a \$100 bank loan). You might cut your order in about half and order more frequently. With a \$100 bank loan at 6% and a stock-turn of 12—which is a conservative estimate, Mr. Wolens—you'd make an annual saving of \$18 after paying your interest charges. I don't need to tell you that that's 6 pairs of dependable Stalwart overalls absolutely free—overalls that you still sell for \$5.50 a pair.

To handle the order in this profitable way, attach your check to the memo I've enclosed and mail both of them back to me in the en-

closed envelope. We can have your Stalwart overalls to you in about five days.

Usually you can specifically isolate the sore spot in a dealer's situation and by impersonal, positive phrasing save the customer's pride, suggest the remedy, and leave the way open for future negotiations. In consumer letters involving a retail customer, however, nine times out of ten the reason for the refusal is the customer's failure to take care of obligations. That is a highly personal reflection, one which many retail credit men shy away from by feigning incomplete information and inviting the customer to come in and talk the matter over. We do not agree with the philosophy or the procedure involved in a letter like the following, but some authors do:

We heartily thank you for the implied compliment you paid the Bowen Company when you applied for a charge account.

According to the usual procedure in opening a new account, we sought information which would serve as a basis for extending credit to you. While we have gathered some very fine reports of a personal nature, the business reports which we have been able to accumulate do not allow us to make a definite conclusion right now.

We realize that we have only one side of the story; so if you would care to come to the store and talk with us, we shall be glad to have you call at your convenience. Perhaps we can arrive at a better understanding.

In the meantime may we serve you on a cash basis? We want to serve you to the best of our ability and to continue to merit your good will.

One of the reasons for writing such a letter, according to its sponsors, is that to tell a customer he has had unfavorable reports submitted by his references is a violation of the confidential aspects of credit-information exchanges. To that we can only raise a polite eyebrow. Unless you divulge names and/or enough specific details to reveal identity of a reference, you're doing no such thing. Furthermore, you're doing a customer a service by pointing out what he must do in order to earn (or restore) his credit standing. Such a retail credit refusal as the following is desirably forthright and businesslike (in the usual pattern of buffer, reasons, positive refusal, forward look, counterproposal in the form of a bid for cash business):

We appreciate your request for a credit account at Aiken's as a compliment on our way of doing business.

For fifty years Aiken's has been bringing its customers quality merchandise at fair prices. This, as you realize, requires careful merchandising policies on our part. Not the least of these savings—the policy of paying cash for merchandise, thereby receiving discounts and eliminating interest charges, which we are able to pass on to

Aiken customers in the form of lower prices—necessitates that we receive prompt payment from our credit customers.

As you were an applicant for a credit account, we followed our usual practice and asked for information from retail credit sources.

We realize that it is often temporarily difficult to meet all obligations promptly and that very likely in a short time you will have qualified for a charge account at Aiken's by taking care of your other obligations.

You will continue to receive the same courteous treatment that made you favor Aiken's in the first place. We certainly want to have you as a customer. With our will-call, budget, or layaway plans at your disposal, you may own anything in Aiken's within a short time by making convenient payments of your choice. Come in soon and let us serve you in this way.

The following letter refusing credit to a young man just out of college and with unsteady, low-income employment talks concretely and sensibly; it's a good credit-education letter. Note how the writer stressed the idea that character was not the basis for refusal.

When you wrote to us last week asking for credit, as a member of the Illinois Credit Union we automatically asked the Union for your record. You can well be proud of the report which I received. The complimentary reports on your excellent character indicate a promising future.

There is absolutely no black mark against your record. The fact that you have never defaulted or delayed in paying an account means that you will be able to get credit without any trouble when your income increases.

We could extend credit to you on the basis of your personal record alone, for we know that you fully intend to meet any obligations you undertake. But if some unforeseen expense should come up, with your present income you could not pay your account. As a co-operating member of the Credit Union, we would then be compelled to submit your name as a poor credit risk. Such a report would limit your chances of obtaining credit in the future—perhaps at a time when you need it more than now. For your own benefit, you'll be better off to stick to cash purchases now.

Thank you for thinking of us. We shall look forward to the time when you can comfortably and safely contract for credit purchases with us. In the meanwhile, you can make your dollars reach further by buying from Bowen's for cash, for we can buy in quantity, save on shipping costs, and take advantage of discounts. We pass these savings on to you in the form of lower prices. When you buy at Bowen's, your income is inflated because you get quality merchandise at low prices.

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Letters limiting the credit of an old established customer are no different from refusals to new customers; they just adapt the talking points.

It is certainly good to see how well you are selling Carlton heaters. The \$635 order for September delivery you gave Mr. Ray indicates a bright outlook for fall sales.

We want to work right along with you. In trying to be of service to you always, however, we often make constructive suggestions. Now, for example, the large order you placed in March, together with this current one, leads us to believe that you may be overstocking Carltons. With this shipment your account would stand about \$500 beyond the limit we agreed on when you first started to deal with us five years ago. Since we believe that the proposed balance would be too great a burden upon you because it would throw your payables out of line, we suggest two alternative courses of action.

If your ordering such a stock of Carlton heaters indicates that there is an extensive home-building program going on in Fairview, your comments on local conditions and the information requested on the enclosed form may serve as a basis for extending your credit limit to the point where it will take care of your needs.

Or we will extend to July 10 the 5% discount on your \$940 March order. By sending us your check for \$893, you will not only put your account in shape for the present order; you will also mark up greater profits on the sale of your Carltons.

We're just as anxious as you are, Mr. Skinner, to send you this latest shipment. Please take one of these courses so that we may ship your new stock of Carltons in time for the fall season.

As in any good refusal, none of these apologizes or harks back to the refusal in the end. To do so indicates that you are not confident in your decision. The appended check-listed items on pages 652-53 incorporate the major suggestions for handling credit refusals or limitations.

# VIII. Persuasive Messages: Requests

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## Special Requests

- Securing Interest
- Justifying the Request
- Minimizing Obstacles
- Positively Anticipating Acceptance
- Persuasive Claims and Policy Complaints
- Persuasive Requests for Credit

## Special Requests

Though requests for information about products, services, and people constitute the bulk of inquiries sent by businessmen, sometimes they need special favors from people who have no built-in motivation to reply. These special requests are more difficult writing problems than direct requests (or inquiries)—and for a highly understandable reason: most people, when asked to do something even slightly out of the ordinary, can think of two reasons why they should not comply with the request for every one reason why they should.

No one ever has enough money or time to give either of them spontaneously and unquestioningly. No one is willing to reveal business information without first knowing how it will be used and deciding that the purpose is good. To put the question directly in these cases is to get an immediate "No." So the special request has to be a persuasive letter. Like the simple inquiry, the special request is specific and concise, but it is not direct; and, because it usually requires more details in development, it is usually longer.

Favor-seeking letters are C-plan letters, as already discussed in Chapter IV (p. 105). As explained there, the secret of successful persuasive copy is to (1) offer, suggest, or imply a benefit to the reader—at least talk about something that will be of interest to him as a means of securing his interest; (2) explain the worth of your proposal, to justify it in your reader's eyes; (3) try to overcome objections; and (4) after giving necessary details of circumstances, confidently ask the reader to do what you want him to do.

**Securing Interest.** If you are going to strike the appropriately persuasive theme, you need to analyze the situation to select the most pertinent and applicable motive.

Dollars being what they must be in American business thinking, the strongest appeal is one that holds out to the reader the prospects of sales, of saving money, or of promoting good will with an audience wherein sales may ultimately materialize. Such potential-dollar themes hold out to your reader the most concrete form of reader benefit and are responsible for this opening to an advertising manager of a manufacturing company:

What would it be worth to Rigate to add some 8,000 potential customers to its prospect list?

and this opening to the circulation manager of a magazine:

Who will be your readers ten years from now?

If you can apply such reader-benefit themes appropriately and remain within the realm of good taste (avoiding the suggestion of bribery), you undoubtedly have the strongest appeal you can make.

In many instances, however, such dollar-minded talk would arouse indignation (especially to professional people who do not advertise) or would not apply. But you need not despair of finding a talking point which will stress the reader's benefit or interest rather than your own. The letter to the correspondence supervisor (back on p. 105) that began—

How often have you received—from well-educated people—letters that are not worth your attention?

—clearly holds out a benefit to the reader by talking in terms of making Mr. Gaines's job easier. Many times the basis for a busy businessman's filling out a time-consuming questionnaire (or one that asks for information ordinarily restricted to the firm) is his realization that, as a result of the information thus gathered and made available to him, he will be more efficient at his job.

Indirect benefits can also be applied. When you can show your reader how your project (and his contribution) will promote the welfare of a group of which he is a member or in which he has an interest, you can write a strong letter. On this basis you might write a letter inviting a public accountant to speak to a college accounting club or a correspondence supervisor to address a group of teachers of business writing or an alumnus of a professional fraternity to take on a responsible office in the organization. Such appeals are not what is frequently called "altruism" (which Webster defines as "regard for and devotion to the interests of others"), the basis for most charity drives.<sup>1</sup> Though many special-request letters are written with

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<sup>1</sup> Though letters seeking funds for worthy causes are special-request letters and thus within the scope of this analysis, we think it best not to take them up here because they are too highly specialized and because of their frequent civic, religious, and fraternal

appeals to altruism, in business situations you will write more successful favor-seeking letters if you select and emphasize reader-benefit talking points.

The following letter (asking an advertising manager for free samples) stresses reader benefit throughout—so forcefully as to be almost browbeating, in fact:

How much would it be worth to Rigate to add some 8,000 potential customers to its prospect list?

You can increase the good will toward your company of even more people than this—and at a relatively small cost.

Attracting around 300 contestants and 8,000 on-lookers, "A" Day each spring at the University is a festival of fun—a program of pie-eating contests, sack races, beauty contests, and other collegiate horsing-around.

Prizes for the winners of these contests are contributed by local merchants who realize the sales-building value of such donations. But if we had some prizes which we could give to each participant—winner and loser alike—it would be a good opportunity to introduce under most favorable circumstances someone's product and house.

The loud speakers would blare out, "And in addition, each participant will receive one tube of Picote tooth paste!" Some 8,000 people would hear this . . . and would laugh . . . and would remember your brand name. And 300 would actually receive your product to use and tell their friends about.

The special "A" Day edition of the student paper will carry an account of all prizes given, and the program will also list all contributors.

A man of your experience knows the value of such advertising.

Won't you, then, write me (in time for our February planning) that you will send us 300 sample tubes of Picote? You'll be getting some low-cost, effective advertising.

If you will look back at the letter beginnings quoted in this section, you will note that, in addition to highlighting reader benefit (or at least reader interest), these openings are questions. You will note, too, that the questions are rhetorical. Ordinarily you do not ask them to get their answers, as in inquiries, but to start the reader thinking and make him read on.

We do not mean to imply that all persuasive requests must begin with a question. In the preceding letter, for example, you could

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manifestations. When faced with such problems, you can be sure that the fundamental principles we present here will apply; but for more detailed techniques and "tricks of the trade," check some books like Margaret Fellows and Stella Koenig's *Tested Methods of Raising Money for Churches, Colleges, and Health and Welfare Agencies*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1959.

omit the first sentence (a question) and interweave the figure into the second (a statement). But the question beginning commands greater attention than a declarative statement and can be phrased more readily to lead your reader to a contemplation of your suggestion. Too, a question is never as challenging as some statements are, and it can be subtly flattering. In phrasing such questions, however, you will be on safer ground if you eliminate the possibility of either a "Yes" or a "No" answer. To make the reader contemplate the circumstance that will lead up to the request, the following opening makes use of the same strategy:

What Ford philosophy of management caused the change  
from "Made in Texas by Texas Labor"  
to "Made in Texas by Texans"?

We do not mean to imply that to secure interest in favor-seeking letters you must studiously avoid questions that can be answered with either "Yes" or "No." The following opening addressed to a retailing man of national standing contemplating entering the Texas market is certainly a good one:

Wouldn't you consider the respect and attention of some 200 key Texas retailers a valuable opportunity to test the true business conditions in that state?

The mental response to such a question is positive. And as long as you can be fairly sure of getting a positive reaction, you are probably on safe ground. The danger lies in getting an irritated answer—whether that answer is a "Yes" or "No" or any of the variants of "So what?" The student who invited the head of a large public accounting firm to speak to a college group and began with

Do you believe in preparing for the future?

apparently gave little thought to the probable snort or burst of laughter that would result from such a question. He eliminated the irritating aspects (and got closer to the subject of his letter) when he changed his opening to read

What, in your opinion, are the desirable personal characteristics of the successful public accountant?

True, no reader benefit is implied in that beginning. But it is certainly a subject of practical interest to that reader. Of possibly greater reader-benefit implications is this one:

What does it cost you when you have to dismiss a well-grounded junior accountant because of his poor personal characteristics?

The actual cost of additional recruiting and training isn't the only loss, either: the loss of prestige and, possibly, of clients is a greater threat.

Careful study of the preceding beginnings will show two other advantages that come from question beginnings implying reader benefits: (1) They are more likely to keep the reader in the picture and (2) they make the transition to the explanation easier.

**Justifying the Request.** Having secured your reader's interest with a beginning which holds some promise of benefit or at least talks of something of interest, you usually need to devote the greater part of your letter to explaining what your project is and what good comes of it. Two cautions need to be inserted here, however. The first is that you should not be writing the letter unless you cannot get the necessary information or assistance by your own efforts. The second is: DO NOT BEGIN YOUR LETTER WITH EXPLANATION OR DETAILS OF CIRCUMSTANCES. As in the simple inquiry, you certainly want to be specific. But as they start to read, busy readers (the only kind you send such letters to) aren't even faintly interested in

The National Association of Advertising Teachers of America, which is made up of some 600 teachers in all sections of the country, is planning its annual convention in New York at the Madison Hotel on July 10, 11, and 12.

Of course, a member of the Association planning to attend the meeting would be. Even a non-member would be, after having been almost or completely persuaded to give a talk to the group. Indeed, he would *have* to be so informed. Details concerning who, what, when, where, why, how (sometimes how much) always need to be clarified—but not until after the big idea of the reader's benefit or contribution has been highlighted. A speaker, for instance, needs to know the nature and size of his audience, the time and place, the facilities available to him, the amount of time allotted to him, and the topic (if you are assigning him one). He may need to know how many other speakers there will be and who precedes and follows him. But such details are not appropriate lead-off points to secure interest. Furthermore, they should be incorporated subordinately as much as possible.

Nobody would read with immediate enthusiasm a beginning like this:

As a Master's candidate at Harwood University I am preparing a thesis on palletization. Professor H. D. Brunham of our Marketing Department has suggested that I write to you to find out the results of your experience.

Notice in the following copy how the young man seeking this information not only changed his opening to an interest-arousing question but also how he subordinated the necessary but uninteresting details of the original opening:

Just what are the economies of palletization?

Are they as great as my experience in the service led me to believe?

Has palletization been adopted by an increasing number of business firms since the war?

Regardless of your experience in using pallets, your comments in answering these questions could contribute materially in making a worth-while, authentic, down-to-earth thesis of the one I am preparing as partial requirement for an M.S. degree at Alabama. Too, the finished thesis may well be of practical interest to all users and potential users of pallets.

Perhaps you have some printed material which you can simply enclose in the stamped, addressed envelope I've included. If not, will you take a few minutes to give me in a letter the background of your experience with pallets, the cost of palletizing (with particular emphasis on warehousing), current uses or ideas in palletization, and/or possible sources?

Although I don't have to, I'd like to be able to quote you; but I'll handle the material with whatever degree of confidence and anonymity you specify. And no part of this correspondence will ever be used for any purpose other than research, I assure you.

Since I shall have to assemble material and start writing by June 1, I'd be most grateful if you'd let me hear from you before that date.

If you would like to read the finished thesis for a new idea or two that you might be able to put to work, I'll be glad to lend you my personal copy shortly after August 25.

Frequently you must ask your reader to act by a certain date. When you have to, explain why, as the preceding letter does. Thus you avoid seeming to push a man who is doing you a favor.

Note also that this writer promised discretion in handling the material, attempted to minimize the burdensome aspects, and in the final sentence reminded the reader of possible benefit by way of motivation. (From seven requests the young man received five detailed replies.)

**Minimizing Obstacles.** Even though you may have supplied a very good reason which highlights the reader's advantage or interest, in most circumstances there is some fly in the ointment: a negative factor which you have to overcome. It may be a sum of money you are asking for which you feel reasonably certain your reader is going to consider out of line; then you break it down into several payments. It may be that you can offer no fee or a smaller fee than a program speaker is accustomed to receiving; then you cite other (perhaps intangible) rewards. It may be that you're asking for secret information. If so, assure the reader that you will do all you can to protect

his interest. Regardless of the case or the circumstance, you can usually find some positive corollary to the drawback.

As added inducement you want to make the job sound as easy as possible and as pleasurable as possible. Phrasing can do a lot here. The following letter is a good example of establishing a negative idea in positive language. The fourth paragraph implies, "See, Mr. Philipson, this really won't be much extra work," and the fifth one implies, "Sorry, there's no pay in this deal."

Don't you agree, Mr. Philipson, that a business leader who's on the firing line every day can lend real punch to Tau Kappa Rho activities?

Of course, we give TKR's the benefits of brotherhood and a certain amount of social life, but our real reason for being is to get these promising young men realistically oriented to business life while they're still in school.

It's that keen desire of mine to see these future business leaders get superior guidance that makes me ask you to become TKR's Midwest District Supervisor. As you know, the District Supervisor, through letters and visits, helps the local chapters develop and expand business-orienting programs.

Frequently you'd be able to combine business and fraternity trips, I'm sure, for the Midwest District of six states and twenty-two chapters almost corresponds with your sales district. You'd be able to spend many pleasant evenings telling the boys how American does it! And you'd undoubtedly spot a number of promising candidates for openings with your company two, three, and four years from now.

Of course, you'd have an expense account for stationery and traveling. But your real payoff would come from seeing these boys get a head start in their professional lives.

Won't you, therefore, write me that I may nominate you to the General Executive Committee when it meets here in Chicago May 21?

Finally, the mechanical aspects of complying with your request should be reduced to the minimum of detail, time, and money. That is why most questionnaires are fill-in or check-off forms and why a return-addressed reply device requiring no postage ordinarily accompanies such requests.

***Positively Anticipating Acceptance.*** After establishing the reader's benefit or contribution, making clear exactly what is wanted and why, and minimizing obstacles, the writer should confidently ask the reader to comply with the request. Hesitant, apologetic expressions belittle the request itself and have the disadvantage of suggesting excuses to the reader as reasons for his refusal. Such expressions as the following hinder rather than help the request:

I realize you are a very busy man, but. . . .

I'm sorry to trouble you for such an apparently insignificant matter; however. . . .

I hesitate to bother you with such a request. . . .

If you consider this a worth-while project. . . .

Eliminate such thinking (maybe by rereading the discussion on "Success Consciousness," p. 114) and forthrightly name the specific action you want the reader to take. Though you may have referred to it earlier, be sure to ask for it or at least refer to it near the end.

In your favor-seeking letters apply the summary of points on pages 654-55.

### Persuasive Claims and Policy Complaints

Sometimes you will have good reason to believe that you will have to be rather persuasive in order to get results on your claim. Your reason may be that you know the reader to be rather reluctant to grant claims, that your case is subject to some question and you need to make as good a case as you can within the facts, or (most frequently) that you have already tried the direct claim and have been turned down.

Whatever the cause, you write a C-plan letter (similar to the special request) when you need to be persuasive, and you can appeal to any desire that might motivate the reader. Some of the main appeals (more or less in ascending order of force and objectionable tone) are to the reader's desire for (1) customer satisfaction, good will, and favorable publicity; (2) a continued reputation for fair dealing; and (3) legal meeting of a guarantee.

Again your letter is divided rather distinctly into three parts, but their contents are somewhat different from those of the direct claim:

1. You begin by stating and getting agreement on the principle which is the basis of your claim. (In logic, it would be called the "major premise.")
2. You explain all the facts in detail, as in any claim. (The term in logic is the "minor premise.") This part may be several paragraphs long. In it you show clearly the reader's responsibility.
3. You apply the facts or minor premise to the principle or major premise so as to draw a conclusion, as the logician would call it. The conclusion will be that the reader should act in a certain way. You request that he act as the logic has clearly shown that he should.

Here are two examples of how the system works. The first was an initial claim. It was successful, in spite of the fact that a glance may suggest that the writer had no justified claim. A closer look, however,

will make clear that he did. The situation was quite different from a person's just buying something and finding a few days later that the seller has reduced the price. The key difference is the salesman's assurance to the claimant that he would not save money by waiting. The appeal is, therefore, to the reader's desire for customer confidence.

If your customers do not trust your salesmen, it doesn't do much good for you to go to a lot of trouble and expense in selecting and training salesmen, does it, Mr. Barnes? That's why I'm writing to you.

On July 5 I was in your store looking at an XXXX suit priced at \$67.75. I decided to leave and wait for a late-summer sale, as I frequently do. But your salesman assured me that there would be no sale on XXXX suits, that the manufacturer had never allowed its suits to be sold at reduced prices, and would not this year. So, since I wanted the suit, I bought it.

Now I notice that the price has been reduced to \$53.95 and that you are selling at that price.

My plan, you see, would have saved me \$13.80. Because I was induced to buy through your salesman's assurance that I could not get the suit cheaper by waiting, I believe you will agree that I am entitled to a refund of \$13.80.

I am sure that you want me to trust your salesmen. You can renew my faith by standing behind what they say.

The following illustration of a persuasive claim was written after a claim brought a proposal to compromise. This letter is an answer to that compromise proposal. It got the money, the full amount without compromise, by appealing to fair-minded analysis of the facts (and hence the injustice of compromise in the case).

GENTLEMEN:

Subject: Claim #070-6289

If a salesman for the XXXX Casualty Company were trying to sell me a policy and I offered to pay him half the premium he requested, do you think he would take it? I don't. That would be a compromise.

Compromises are for cases where there is doubt about responsibility or about the amount of damage done. In my claim, there is no doubt about either.

Analysis of the facts will show that Mr. Hall ran up behind me so fast that he could not control his car and hit the left rear part of the side of my car. Clearly he was responsible.

I got three estimates of the repair job to be sure of having a fair appraisal of the damages. The lowest of the three was \$86. So there is no doubt about the damage.

## 250 COMMUNICATING THROUGH LETTERS AND REPORTS

I am therefore returning the RELEASE AND SETTLEMENT form you sent and asking that you send another based on one of the estimates I formerly sent in. That is the only fair settlement.

I know that your job is to keep your loss ratio down as low as possible while being fair about the obligations the Company assumes in insuring clients. The solution is to settle on the basis of one of the estimates submitted.

I look forward to receiving that settlement.

The policy complaint may be like a direct claim or a persuasive one, but it is more likely to be persuasive.

Whereas claims ask restitution for mistakes, damages, or unsatisfactory products, policy complaints request correction of poor service or unsatisfactory policies and practices. The following are two typical situations:

If there's anything our customers like better than XXXX strawberry ice cream, it's XXXX chocolate or vanilla. That's why many people were disappointed last Sunday when we received an entire delivery of strawberry instead of the chocolate and vanilla we ordered.

If you remember last Sunday, you know it was a pretty hot day—a good day to sell ice cream. We sold 2,000 cups but turned away hundreds of tired, hungry swimmers because they insisted on chocolate or vanilla. I believe I could have sold the remaining 1,000 cups had they been those flavors.

Our customers like XXXX ice cream so well that we'd like to continue selling it. Perhaps a little more care in packing, or a little better system of labeling, will assure you of delivering the right flavors for my future orders, and thus increase both our sales.

May I depend on you?



Am I right in thinking that Racine Motors wants its policy on direct-sale commissions and co-operative selling campaigns to promote long-range good will and increased sales in this territory?

Because I think so but find the present practice is not working out that way, I think you will want to review your policies in view of my experiences.

Recently one of our salesmen called on a prospect in our territory and found him already enjoying the reliability and efficiency of a 20 h.p. Racine Motor, which we normally stock. Further investigation revealed that he had bought the motor directly from you at a price below our selling price. Yet we have received no dealer's commission on this sale. This is one of several occasions brought to my attention in the past year which prompt me to ask you for clarification of our agreement.

Admittedly with the helpful assistance of your missionary salesmen, we have been able to sell a substantial group of the industrial users in this area on the economy and dependability of the Racine Electric Motor. We want to keep and expand this patronage, but it will be difficult if we are working at cross-purposes with you. It will be to our mutual good if we and you quote uniform prices and if we get our dealer's commission on any direct sales. You gain by being relieved of the marketing functions and by having a ready-made market for your motor, and we gain by getting our just profits and keeping the good will of our customers.

We have been contemplating an expansion of our stock to include your 60 h.p. motor, which would play an important part in our sales program. Please give us a definite working policy so we will know where we stand.

### Persuasive Requests for Credit

You can treat the application for credit in direct, brief style when you are reasonably sure that you can meet the firm's credit tests. When you know you are going to have to ask for special concession(s), however, a persuasive letter patterned after the special request, C-plan letter may be in order. The presentation establishes interest by stressing potential profitable business, stresses the capacity of the management, establishes a sensible plan for meeting the obligation, and confidently asks for action. Like all the letters in this chapter, it is a modification of the AICA (attention, interest, conviction, action) of sales letters. In the following case the young man was asking for 150 days' credit, knowing that 30 days was the usual time allowed by the Long-Shearer Company. Though the letter is unusually long, detailed, and persuasive for a credit application, it was written for an unusual situation.

Lots of auto-accessories dollars are floating around in booming Lubbock. Yet the chains sell only a standard line.

An alert independent retailer offering a complete line of parts and accessories could certainly count on the reputation of Long-Shearer accessories to give him a rapid turnover and a good chance to get his share of this increasing market.

Hence my optimism about the store I plan to open June 24. Right on Main Street, near several garages and body shops, the 50-foot-front store is out of the high-rent district, yet accessible enough to get me my share of the walking trade. The market survey I made last week indicates that conservatively I can expect 300 people in my store every day. And the managers of all the garages and body shops within four blocks of my store have promised me they'll buy from me.

They got to know me while I worked in my father's Ford service shop during and after high school. We became better friends in the year and a half I spent in the parts department after serving in the Navy and before returning to the University of Texas to complete my B.B.A. degree. I made friends with them—and I learned a lot about the business. I also made friends of most of the young businessmen in town through membership in Rotary and serving a term as President of Jaycees.

Although my father's death stops my chances to go into the Ford agency because there was a survivor-take-all clause in the partnership agreement, I'm willing to put every bit of the \$10,000 insurance money he left me into the new store. My wife and I have no illusions of getting rich quickly and are fully prepared to plow profits back into our store so that it will get started on the right foot. You can see from the following allocation of the \$10,000 that the store will be financially sound.

With \$1,000 for store equipment, \$1,800 for operating expenses (including six months' rent at \$150 per month), and \$1,200 plus a small personal fund for six months' personal expenses, \$6,000 will be left to buy an initial inventory. For the sort of stock I'll need to have an edge on my competitors, I should have an initial inventory of \$10,000. I would like to finance a \$5,000 Long-Shearer accessories stock by paying \$3,000 now, \$1,000 in 120 days, and the other \$1,000 30 days after that. I plan to finance a \$5,000 parts stock from the Auto-Life Company in the same manner. With Long-Shearer accessories selling as well as they do, plus living close to my budget with a wife who's able to give me plenty of help, I'm confident that these estimations allow an adequate margin of safety.

An accessories stock turn of 3, and a markup of 50 per cent, will give me a gross profit on accessories of \$7,500 in 120 days. Since I've budgeted my own money for operating expenses for six months, there should be almost all of the \$7,500 left to pay for the credit stock and reorder another \$5,000 accessories stock. Look over the enclosed order and see if you don't agree that the accessories I've ordered will sell quickly.

You'll notice that the enclosed list of references is a diversified group of Lubbock businessmen, ranging from Mr. Logan, President of the Lubbock National Bank, to Ed Duffie, Manager of the Fix-um Garage. Any one of these men, as well as the Lubbock Retail Credit Bureau, will be glad to write to you about me.

I shall be grateful for your help in starting my new store. With business progressing as it is in Lubbock, and fast-moving Long-Shearer accessories to sell, I feel certain that the new store will be a success.

## **IX. Persuasive Messages: Sales**

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“The Marketing Mix”—and Letters

General Sales Strategy

Analyzing the Product

Finding the Prospects

Choosing the Appeal(s)

Identifying the Specific Goal

Writing the Prospecting Sales Letter

Getting Attentive Interest

Establishing Belief and Trust

Overcoming Price Resistance

Asking Confidently and Specifically for Action

Adapting to Classes

Tests and Testing

Writing Sales Series

The Wear-Out Series

The Campaign Series

The Continuous Series

PRODUCTS are made to satisfy needs or desires. In these times of mass production, they are usually made for sale to satisfy the needs and desires of other people—rarely for the maker's own use.

Often the ultimate users are not conscious of their needs or desires until somebody else points them out. If such potential users realize their needs, marketing the product is a matter of making it available when and where wanted at an acceptable price and filling the orders. If not, marketing also involves sales promotion—pointing out needs and desires, and how the product will satisfy them—by personal selling, advertising, and mail.

### **“The Marketing Mix”—and Letters**

Thus you have what is sometimes called “the marketing mix”—

—a *product* designed and made to render certain services which the manufacturer determined by research or supposed to be wanted by a sufficient number of people,

—a group of *prospects* (the people who need or desire those services, who are not getting them, and who can pay for them),

- the *price* at which the product is salable in quantities sufficient to make manufacturing it profitable,
- the *distribution* system (transportation, storage, personnel, and other facilities necessary to make the product available when and where wanted, and to handle the records and finances of the transactions), and
- the *promotional efforts* that induce purchasing by pointing out to likely prospects just how the product will give them services that they probably want, at a price justified by the benefits.

In this chapter we are concerned with *part* of the last ingredient in the marketing mix—sales promotion by mail. Nobody would claim that selling by mail is the whole of selling, or even the biggest part; but neither would anybody—if he knows what actually goes on in American business—deny that it is a big and important part.

Nor are we concerned with all the many forms of sales promotion by mail. Leaflets, stuffers, broadsides, bulletins, brochures, catalogues, reply cards, order forms—all these supplement and support the objective of the sales letter. To attempt to deal with all these forms of mail selling, however, would be far beyond the practical scope of this book or the college course for which it is primarily intended. We are concerned only with the sales letter, the basic form of mailed sales message.

**General Sales Strategy.** Whether you sell by mail or in person, your procedures are essentially the same. You seek to gain the reader's attentive interest, convince him that your proposal is worthwhile, and confidently ask him to take action.

In some cases you already have favorable attention, as when you are answering an inquiry about your product. In those cases your job is to marshal your sales points and adapt them to your reader in a message that answers his questions, convinces, and asks for action. You've already learned to do that—especially in your study of invited sales (Chapter V).

But in prospecting—or “cold-turkey selling,” as many professionals label the procedure—you have the preliminary job of arousing interest so that your reader will be eager to see what you have to say.

The surest way to get your reader to read is to stress some benefit to him. This benefit theme must come from what you have to sell. Obviously, then, you must know a good deal about your product, its uses, and the kind(s) of people who might benefit from it. From analysis of your product and prospect comes the selection of the appeal(s) to be stressed. And from a knowledge of marketing methods and people's buying habits comes the decision of what you want your reader to do after he finishes reading your message.

**Analyzing the Product.** The first and foremost consideration in

marketing any product is the answer to "What will it do for people?" You sell only when you satisfy a need or desire.

Though you need to know a great deal about the physical characteristics of the product you are attempting to sell (such as size, shape, color, length, breadth, height, composition, for example), physical description of the product is not effective selling. The psychological description—interpretation of physical features in terms of reader benefits—is the effective part of selling.

Aluminum cooking ware, for example, may be just metal pots and pans to you. But to a cook, aluminum utensils (in psychological description)

- Give lifetime wear.
- Maintain smooth surfaces because they do not nick, chip, crack, or peel.
- Provide even, uniform heat, thus decreasing the chances that food will burn on the top, bottom, and sides, yet be raw in the middle.
- Enable the cook to do waterless cooking or cooking at a reduced temperature and thus preserve food values that would otherwise be cooked away or poured down the drain.
- Make dishwashing easier.

A dictation machine for a business executive enables him to record his ideas, it is true. But it also enables him to

- Release the high-priced dictation time of his secretary for other duties.
- Dictate when (and, with a portable machine, where) he wants to—as time permits and as ideas occur to him.
- Arrange work for his office staff in his absence.
- Have a record which does not get "cold," which anyone can transcribe with greater accuracy than is often possible with an individual's shorthand notes.
- Have a record which he himself can play back without an interpreter.

Insulation is not just pellets or bats of certain sizes and materials. To a true salesman, it keeps houses warmer in winter, cooler in summer. It thus reduces heating costs in cold months and cooling costs in warm months. It also deadens outside noises. Since it is fire-resistant, it reduces chances of fire and also decreases fire damage if and when fire breaks out. In view of all these reasons, insulation adds to the resale value of a house.

Even a child's tricycle (made of steel and chrome, with first-grade rubber tires) does more than provide pleasure for its youthful owner. It teaches him muscular co-ordination, helps to develop

his visual perception and judgment, and develops his leg muscles. It also releases his parents from a certain amount of time spent in direct supervision.

You seek through such analysis of your product to identify the promises of benefit you can make to a reader considering use of your product. Through psychological description you establish for a reader a worth which he might not recognize if he saw the product *only* through his own eyes.

Psychological description is interpretation, which should be given primary emphasis. Physical description is specific detail, evidence incorporated subordinately to bear out the promises established in psychological-description phrases and passages.

For convincing your reader that your product is the one he should spend his money for rather than miss the benefits it will give him, you as a salesman must have details concerning how, of what, by whom, and where it is made and how effectively it operates. The circumstances under which it is sold (warranties, guarantees, servicing) are also considerations affecting your analysis and subsequent presentation. This physical description is necessary for conviction, but in the final sales presentation it is subservient to psychological description—the interpretation of the thing to be sold in terms of pleasure, increased efficiency, increased profit, or whatever benefit you can most specifically promise.

You need to find out as much about your product as you possibly can through observation, examination, use, testing, and reading; only then are you in a position to make wise choices concerning who is most likely to buy, how you can appeal to those people most effectively, and what is the most appropriate action for you to ask your reader to take in furthering the sale.

Of course, your analysis and your interpretation will be affected by whether your product is very new and the only one of its kind (the pioneering stage in marketing), whether it and many others like it are fairly well known to your public (the competitive stage), or whether it is very well known to your public and is the only one of its kind or accepted by the public as unquestionably the best (the retentive stage). But in all three stages your basic selling points come from your analysis of how people use your product to satisfy a need.

**Finding the Prospects.** True prospects are people who need the service your product will give, can pay for it, and are not getting it. Determining who these people are and their approximate number is part of your market analysis.

Of course, some people who appear to be prospects will already be enjoying the benefits of your product or one like it. In that case, they aren't true prospects. But unless you know for certain

(through a list of owners, which you may have for your own product but are not likely to have for a competitor's), you need to find out. And the cheapest way to find out is to solicit them.

If you are selling a product that everybody needs, then all you have to verify is your prospects' ability to pay for it. But few products are used by everybody (and when they are, direct mail is not the best way to sell them; direct mail is a specialized class medium rather than a mass medium).

In determining need, you have to start with logical analysis. For instance, you wouldn't try to sell bikinis to Eskimos or Mackinaws to Cubans because you would assume that they don't need them. You wouldn't try to sell a central heating unit to apartment dwellers. You certainly wouldn't waste your time trying to sell a yacht to government clerical workers. Nor would you sell many hearing aids to college students.

You would seek to sell a piece of office equipment to some business owner or manager, aluminum cooking ware to housewives and restaurant owners, insulation to homeowners.

Sex, age (and, a close corollary, physical condition), family and dwelling status, vocation, geographical location, and financial situation are some of your more significant considerations in assuming that someone is a logical prospect for your product. In some cases you will need to go further than a logical analysis and make a marketing survey.

Most sales letters have to be turned out in large numbers to secure the volume necessary for profit. But even when they go out by the thousands, they are sent to a selected mailing list. And no mailing will be any good if the list of names to whom it is sent does not represent enough real prospects. Once you determine the general classes of people who are prospects, your next step is securing specific names and addresses to provide yourself with a mailing list.

What you want is a list of people in similar circumstances; the more similarities, the better. You can make your own list, rent one, or buy one. If you have the time and the know-how, you may be able to make a better list than you can buy. The phone book or city directory is a list of people in one city, but they usually do not have enough similarities to justify putting all of them on the mailing list for your product. The yellow pages or other kinds of specialized directories give you at least one other important similarity as a basis for selection. Newspaper clippings and trade reports are helpful in getting names for an initial list or adding names to an already existing one. Often the best list is the firm's present customers. Coupon returns in space advertising will build a list for you.

You can get a big list of low purity (that is, including lots of people who are not really prospects) and low accuracy (lots of wrong addresses)<sup>1</sup> very cheaply. The more specifications (similarities) you put on, the higher the price.

A list house will get you almost any list you order if you're willing to pay the price. There are so many suppliers of lists in all parts of the country that the Department of Commerce issues a directory of them.<sup>2</sup>

Whether you buy, rent, or compile your list, however, for sales effectiveness it must be the correct names and addresses of people with common characteristics. Only then can you adapt your talking points and your references in persuasive fashion, as discussed on pages 109-12.

**Choosing the Appeal(s).** From the analysis of your product come your possible sales points. But you can't tell all of them in detail in one letter, or you'll have a cluttered, shotgun-pattern letter instead of a piercing, rifle-bullet message. After listing them, deciding who the prospects are, and getting your best mailing list, your next job is to select for emphasis the central selling point—the one big theme around which your letter is built. It is the answer to this question: What one feature of the product is most likely to induce the prospect to buy? Other supporting points are interwoven, relegated to an enclosure, or left for a subsequent mailing.

People buy for many reasons: to make or save money, to preserve health, to save time, to avoid exertion, to protect themselves or their families, to protect or build a reputation, and for many other reasons, which, if you want to, you can find listed in multitude in countless books on psychology, salesmanship, sociology, and marketing. Pride, love, acquisitiveness, self-indulgence, self-preservation, curiosity, and fear play their parts in inducing interest and stimulating the final action.

Man is both rational and emotional. He needs a rational reason to support an emotional desire for something. Arguing the relative importance of the two in selling is comparable to a vigorous debate over which came first, the chicken or the egg. In writing good sales letters, if you remind your reader of a need which your product will meet and supply evidence to back up your promise; if you stress what you think is the most important reason why the particular group of readers will buy, you won't need to worry about whether you are employing rational or emotional techniques. You'll be using both. And that's as it should be.

Certainly, effective adaptation is necessary. Your choice of theme

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<sup>1</sup> About 15 per cent of Americans' addresses change yearly, according to professional mailing-list people.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Postman Rings for Sales," *Fortune*, 47:134-37, 178-84, February, 1959.

for your message will be affected by one or more of the significant considerations of the prospect's sex, vocation, location, age, source and amount of income, and social, professional, or educational status. One of the most obvious differences that affect your choice of theme is that between dealers and consumers. Dealers buy for the *profit* they will make on reselling. That depends on the *number* they can sell and the *markup*, less any expense and trouble necessary in backing up guarantees with replacements, repairs, and service calls. Consumers buy for the various services the product will render. But even in dealer letters you wouldn't write the same things to a large metropolitan eastern store that you would to a small rural southern store.

You can't be certain, either, of the wisdom of your choice of theme. Testing two or more different letters on a part of your list in a preliminary mailing (about which we'll say more later) may help you to arrive at a choice; but sometimes even testing does not resolve your dilemma.

For example in selling steel desks and chairs to fraternity houses, two writers came up with two different themes. One played up comfort and subordinated the factor of appearance; the other stressed appearance to the subordination of durability and comfort:

How many hours of each day do you spend at your desk?

Three? Four? Maybe more?

From experience you know how important it is that your desk be roomy and your chair comfortable.

You can be assured of the comfort and convenience you need with Carroll steel desks and chairs. Especially designed as a study unity for college men, they are also sturdy and good looking.

Since the desk is 31 inches high, you can cross your knees beneath the top. Or if you want to sit with your feet on the desk, propped back in your chair, you can do so without marring the surface or breaking the steel-welded chair.

Whether you choose the steel top at \$20.75 or the linoleum top at

Wouldn't you be proud to show your rushees uniform desks and chairs?

Fine-looking study equipment will create an initial favorable impression. And they will realize, as you do, that following rush week comes work.

In Carroll steel desks and chairs you'll have study equipment that will stay good looking and provide years of comfortable use. The top has been chemically treated to avoid burns and scratches and to eliminate stains from liquids. Welded-steel construction assures you that your Carroll desk and chair will retain their attractive straight lines. And a choice of battle gray, olive green, or mahogany enables you to select a color which will blend in well with your present furnishings.

\$15.75, you don't need to worry about nicks and scratches. Either top, 28 inches wide by 42 inches long, gives you ample room for all the books and papers you have in use. Shelves at one end, and a large drawer, keep your other books and supplies at hand.

And you can have Carroll desks and chairs in battle gray, olive green, or mahogany.

After you've had a chance to read over the enclosed leaflet (which explains the attractive quantity discounts available to you), you'll see why Carroll study equipment was recently chosen for dormitories at Michigan, Iowa, and Princeton.

Both these letters are well-knit presentations of their selected themes. Each establishes the same information about the product. But we suspect that the first version would sell more chairs to house committees, because on most campuses comfortable study conditions are more important than appearance, and for a longer time than rushing conditions. You would have to test to be sure.

A letter addressed to the appropriate purchasing agent for the dormitories referred to would have wisely stressed still a different possible theme: holding down maintenance and replacement costs.

You'll see further illustration of how sales appeals vary from letter to letter in the two series which appear in the final pages of this chapter.

***Identifying the Specific Goal.*** You may know before you begin your prewriting analysis exactly what you want your reader to do. That's fine. Analysis and writing are then simplified for you. But you'll want to be sure that the action you request your reader to take is logical in the light of purchasing conditions, which are governed by the nature of the product, the circumstances of the customer, and authorized, organized marketing channels. Many sales letters cannot and should not drive for the completion of the sale. All they do is ask for a show of interest (and thus help to weed out all but genuine prospects). You may want your reader only to request a booklet; you may want him to come to your show room; you may want him to give you some information about himself; you may want him to authorize the visit of a salesman; in many instances, of course, you can logically

Either the steel top at \$20.75 or the linoleum top at \$15.75 will retain its attractive appearance over the years.

The ample work space of the desk—28 inches wide, 42 inches long, 31 inches high, with shelves at one end and a generous drawer—and the swivel chair of body-comfort design mean comfort for study as well as for long bull sessions.

After you've had a chance to read over the enclosed leaflet (which explains the attractive quantity discounts available to you), you'll see why Carroll study equipment was recently chosen for dormitories at Michigan, Iowa, and Princeton.

ask him to place an order. Regardless of what the appropriate action is, decide on it and identify it specifically before you begin to write.

All possible versions of the letter about fraternity desks and chairs should have some type of action ending, identifying payment and shipping conditions if an order by letter were appropriate or—more likely in this case—inviting the readers to come to a display room or to authorize the visit of a representative.

## Writing the Prospecting Sales Letter

After thorough study of your product and prospect, selection of theme, and decision on your specific goal, you develop that theme in a C-plan letter patterned by some adaptation of the standard sales presentation: Attention, Interest, Conviction, and Action. If you want to substitute *Desire* for *Conviction* in letters appealing largely to emotion, or if you want to add *Desire* as a third step before *Conviction*, go ahead; it won't alter your basic procedure. If you want to call it Promise, Picture, Prove, and Push, you won't go wrong because of your labels. But don't think of a presentation in four or five or even three parts—like a play in three acts. In a good letter, smoothly written for coherence and unity of impression, you can't separate the parts. Though we analyze the writing of a sales letter in terms of getting attentive interest, establishing belief and trust, overcoming price resistance, and confidently asking for action, the final version of it should be a presentation that is smooth because of its coherence and persuasive because of its singleness of purpose.

**Getting Attentive Interest.** If you believe in your product and what it can do for your reader, you'll have no big problem starting a sales letter effectively. All you need to do is hold up the promise of the big benefit your product can contribute to the reader. If it's a genuine benefit and your reader is a real prospect (that is, can possibly use your product and can pay for it), he'll read.

Yet, because of the clamor for attention which many advertisers talk about and write about, many advertisements and letters put on a show with the bizarre and the irrelevant in order to make the reader stop and listen. They seem to say to the reader, "We know you won't listen otherwise; so we're standing on our heads to attract your attention. Of course, standing on our heads won't tell you a thing about our product or what it can do for you, but it'll make you sit up and take notice."

To that, all we can say is, "Sure! The freak at the circus commands attention. And if sheer attention is all you want, walk down Madison Avenue or Michigan Avenue in a bikini or in shorts. You'll get attention. But is it appropriate? Is it in good taste? Will it really help to induce the reader to buy?"

Relevancy is important. Without it, your trick or gadget may be a distraction and a detriment rather than an assist to your sales effort. Tricks are legion, and they create talk, even notoriety, about you. But unless they lead naturally, plausibly, and shortly to what your product can do for your reader, they're not worth the effort and expense.

The American public is a highly educated public. It is quick to criticize or, worse yet, to laugh at advertising and its methods. It hasn't bought the Brooklyn Bridge for a couple of generations. It recognizes a gold brick for what it is worth. The farmer's daughter has been to town—even if it's only via TV. Smug patter about the fourteen-year-old mind is beguiling—and dangerous. Even the fourteen-year-old mind recognizes the difference between "show-off-ship" and real salesmanship.

You'll read much and hear much about tricks, stunts, and gadgets. Good-luck pennies, four-leaf clovers, keys that open the door to everything from business success to a happy home life with your dog, rubber bands (which most of the time only stretch the reader's patience), cartoons, faked telegrams in yellow window envelopes, simulated handwritten messages, names of readers written at the top of the page in red, blue, gold ("the symbol of things precious, and your name means much to us!"), boldface numbers ("2,400,001! What's the 1 for? That's *your copy!*!"), shorthand copy, Chinese writing, the early bird with the worm in his mouth, checkerboards, mirrors, alarm clocks—all these and many others may distract from your sales message rather than assist in it unless they enable you quickly to cut through to the benefit your product can render.

Such tricks have been overused and misapplied in so many instances that one advertiser recently sent the following letter (which you'll recognize as a trick in itself):

I have never tried to fool you.

I have never sent you an order form that looks like an authentic bank check, with or without signatures and countersignatures!

And I've never sent you a bond-like certificate apparently so valuable that it startles you briefly—before you throw it away.

I have never used a brown envelope to make you think your tax refund has finally arrived.

In fact, I've never even sent you a postage stamp!

We here at Bowen's think you're too intelligent to fall for such nonsense!

We're convinced that Bowen customers are an alert and critical, not a gullible, audience. New gimmicks and catch phrases are not going to influence you. . . .

You may dream up a trick occasionally that isn't old stuff to most of your audience and that naturally, plausibly, and quickly sets the stage for the introduction of the benefit your product can render. If it can meet the tests of relevance, plausibility, and speed, you may want to use it. A fire-sale letter typed in red may have salutary appeal. A check form made out to the reader, immediately followed by the lead, "What would it mean to you to get a REAL check like this EVERY MONTH?" may plausibly preface sales talk about an annuity or health insurance.

The salesman of a car air conditioner appropriately started his letter with "98.6" in red, followed by "Pretty hot on the road, isn't it?" He followed that up with "69.8" in blue, with the quick assurance that "That's the comfortable temperature you can drive in with an Air-Temp in your car."

The sales manager who sent a letter on cellophane with the lead, "Here's a value for you that is as clear-cut as the paper on which it is written," used a good (but very expensive) gadget to command attention.

So we do not mean to imply that all tricks, gadgets, and humorous letters are undesirable. Certainly, there is the occasional opportune time for the whimsical, the gracefully turned phrase, the chuckling at man and his idiosyncrasies, and the outright humorous. But before you use what you think is a bright, clever, or punny approach, recall the story that seasoned advertisers tell of the woman who asked her husband if he had seen a certain clever ad. "What was it about?" her husband asked. "I don't remember," the lady replied, "but it was right next to that homely X, X and Y ad."

If you can phrase an opening which is deft, novel, and catchy, use it—provided that it paves the way quickly and naturally to the introduction of what your product can do for your reader. If you can't, forget about it. The product-benefit-contribution beginning is always applicable and always good. Associate the benefit with your reader, and you have a good opening.

A business-reporting service used the following successful opening in a letter to contractors:

A lot of money spent  
on new construction  
in your area—

—is going to wind up in somebody's pocket . . . and it might as well be yours instead of your competitor's!

Another reporting agency got good attention with this opening:

WHAT SORT OF GOVERNMENT  
WILL DOMINATE YOUR BUSINESS  
IN THE DIFFICULT PERIOD AHEAD?

A laundry got the favorable attention of housewives with

We'll wash your shirts, iron them to please the man of the house, and wrap them in cellophane—for two thin dimes.

and another varied the same theme with

Would you wash a shirt, iron it to please the most demanding man, and wrap it in cellophane—for 20¢?

A savings-and-loan association led with

Do your savings work hard enough for you?

And an insurance company seeking to sell education insurance to parents of small children paved the way with

A small monthly saving now will buy your youngster a gift worth \$113,000. There's no catch to it.

The \$113,000—an estate even a man of wealth could be proud to leave his son or daughter—is the difference between the average lifetime earnings of a college graduate and one without this special training, according to a recent national survey made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Selling an automatic typewriter to office managers, the following opening (below a clipped-on photograph of a girl powdering her nose while surrounded by three of the machines referred to) pinpoints a real problem and its solution:

What happens when a girl "powders her nose" in the offices of the Northeastern Mutual Life Insurance Company?

When her typewriter stops, production ceases. And office costs go up.

A variation of theme for the same product went this way:

"I've had five years' experience with the Mutual Life Insurance Company, can type 120 words a minute, am willing to work each day indefinitely, do not get tired, and demand no salary."

Would you hire this typist? We did. And this letter was typed by her in two minutes.

Of course it isn't human. It's a machine—The Robo-Typist—which types any letter you want from a record roll at 120 words a minute.

Note that in all these quoted openings the lead is simply a reminder of a need for which the product is shortly introduced as an agent for satisfying that need. They do not command, preach, cajole, beg, or exhort. They do not challenge. They do not scream in superlatives (finest, amazing) with exclamation points. They do not begin with talk of the product itself ("Now you too can have XYZ dog biscuits!") or the company ("53 years of doing business").

Good openings positively, specifically, and vividly, but believably, say or imply, "I promise you help in handling this specific problem." Thus they get attentive interest through psychological description of the product in use benefiting the reader and cause the reader to want more information, especially on how the product can fulfill the promise.

**Establishing Belief and Trust.** Having made the promise, a letter must quickly supply evidence to back it up. If the opening is successful, it has established tentative favor or agreeableness rather than serious doubt on the reader's part. In effect, the reader has mentally nodded his head in agreement. The next part of your sales letter—which ordinarily consumes the greatest amount of space—tells him how your product does meet his need and gives specific information that will make him believe you. You thus maintain and continue the agreement you establish in the start of the letter.

Explanations and descriptions of the product in use are how you handle this part. Word pictures of how it works and how it is made, performance tests, testimonials of users, statistics of users, facts and figures on sales, guarantees, free-trial offers, offers of demonstrations, and samples are some of your most common devices. Note how the following letter supplies evidence to support its opening claim. (Yes, it's long—as lots of effective sales letters are. If you are concerned about length, read Howard Dana Shaw's "Stop Worrying about Length," *The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising*, 11:7, 8, 10, December, 1948; reprinted in *Writing for Business*.)

The Carriage Return Lever  
On a Manual Typewriter  
Is Costing You Money . . .

. . . and it's money you don't have to spend any more.

Human Efficiency, Inc., of New York City, has completed a series of exacting tests and confirms that you can save as much as one man-hour each day for each typist you employ when you install Speedo Carriage Returns on your manual typewriters.

Watch one of your typists. Every time she returns the carriage to the next line, her left hand makes three movements. When the bell signals the end of a line, her hand moves from the keys to the lever, throws the lever, and then returns to the keys. It looks fast and easy, doesn't it? It is—an expert typist can do it in just one second.

Just one second, but one second becomes one minute when your typist types 60 lines. And that one minute multiplies to one hour every time 3600 lines are typed. From your experience as an office manager, you know that 3600 lines aren't very many for an efficient stenographer to type, especially the short lines required for orders and invoices.

Using a Speedo, your typist performs one step—not three—to return the carriage to the next line. When the bell signals the end of the line, she presses a foot pedal; the carriage automatically spaces correctly and returns to the left margin. One-tenth of a second—not one second—has elapsed.

And because the hands do not have to leave the keyboard, accuracy increases when you install Speedos. Human Efficiency tested 150 women typists using Speedos for two weeks in 20 different large plants. They showed a 16% reduction in errors. Naturally, the amount of time spent in erasing errors was also reduced by 16%.

Part of the explanation for the increase in output and decrease of errors is a reduction in fatigue. Throwing a carriage just once doesn't amount to much, but when your typist repeats the same act hundreds of times she uses up as much energy as she would scrubbing the floor of your office. With the Speedo, however, the strain is not only decreased by two-thirds; it is shifted to the leg and foot, which can bear it far better than the arm. Tests of 45 women typists employed by the Kenoya Wholesale Grocery Company of Columbus, Ohio, showed that after two weeks they increased by 9% the amount of copy produced daily.

Clamped to the carriage-return lever, the Speedo is joined to the foot pedal by a thin wire. The adjustment is simple; you can put one on any standard typewriter in less than five minutes.

Turn to pages 1 and 2 of the enclosed folder and read the complete report of the tests. On page 3 you'll find comments of typists who've used the Speedo and the comments of their office managers. Read how the typists all agree that they had no difficulty learning to use the Speedo efficiently.

Page 4 gives you data on prices and shipping. Note that the Speedo with all its advantages—plus an unconditional 90-day guarantee—is yours for only \$4.50. And by ordering a dozen for \$46 you save 70¢ on each one.

Fill out the enclosed order blank and send it to us in the return envelope provided. We'll immediately ship your Speedos to you by whatever method you direct, either prepaid or C.O.D. Within 10 days at the most you'll be able to see the increased output and accuracy of your typists.

Surely you remember that sincerity is essential to the reader's belief and trust. That you-viewpoint description is vital. That psychological description in terms of the reader's use and benefits is far superior to mere physical description of the product. And that specific words in positive language are also necessary to effective sales techniques. If not, turn back and review the section on Persuasion principles (pp. 101–16) and the analysis of the invited sales letter

(pp. 153-60). All we're suggesting is that you apply the same principles.

**Overcoming Price Resistance.** You've already studied effective ways of handling dollar talk, too (back in the discussion of the invited sales letter, pp. 157-58). The principles are the same in prospecting sales. Were we to repeat them here, we'd just take up space which would merely waste your time if you remember the former discussion.

**Asking Confidently and Specifically for Action.** Likewise, if we discussed again what we've already told you and illustrated for you repeatedly about action endings (indicate what you want your reader to do and how to do it, make it easy and make it sound easy, and supply a stimulus to prompt action in a quick reference to the contribution the product can make to the life of the reader), we'd be using your time unnecessarily and adding to production costs. Furthermore, the points are itemized specifically in the appended summary check list (pp. 656-57). It helps you to review and your instructor to evaluate your letter.

### Adapting to Classes

All good sales letters follow the basic procedures advocated in the preceding pages. Only in their talking points and in their interpretation and references do they differ as they go to farmers instead of bankers, to lawyers instead of engineers, to consumers as opposed to dealers. Much fluff is written and said about letters to women, but there's a lot of evidence pointing to the fact that the American woman—and the homemaker in particular—is a sharp customer, as demanding and calculating in reading the pages of catalogues and magazines as a purchasing agent for a firm is. She's no different when she reads a letter. And much guff circulates about the feminine slant and the masculine slant and which sex should write for which. Such talk is misleading. If you are a person of feeling and imagination and are unselfish enough to forget yourself in analyzing another person's (or group of persons') circumstances, you won't have much trouble writing successfully adapted letter copy.

As an illustration of how tone and talking points differ, study the following two letters. The first is to a homeowner, the second to a dealer. In both cases, the product is a lawnmower which eliminates hand clipping.

#### Lawnmowing Time

Extra Time for  
Summer Rest and Fun!

You can cut your lawnmowing time in half with an easy-operating Multimower because you can eliminate the hand clipping and trimming.

The Multimower gathers all the grass it cuts, too.

So with just one run over the lawn with your Multimower, your lawn is in shape. And it's just a light workout. You can cut your grass flush against fences, trees, and flower beds. The interlocking rotary cutters enable you to mow tall grass and tough weeds with no more effort than it takes to cut short grass. And you're less tired when you get through because you push only the minimum weight when you use this 8½-pound mower. It's light enough for almost any member of the household to use, too.

Even though the Multimower is light, you have a precision mower of sturdy construction and strength-tested materials. The drive shaft is mounted on free-rolling, factory-lubricated, sealed ball bearings which keep dirt and water from rusting these parts. And the cutters are self-sharpening. So your Multimower is always ready for you to use.

If the weather keeps you from mowing your lawn on schedule and grass gets a little too high, simply adjust the handle knob to the cutting height you want, and push your Multimower easily across your lawn, cutting a clean, even 16-inch swath.

Many of the 8,000 enthusiastic Multimower owners have been using theirs for over two years. Some of their statements, along with illustrations and the details of our 90-day structural guarantee, you can read on the two inside pages. You'll see too that we pay shipping charges to your door at the economical price of \$29.95. The time you save on the first summer's Multimowing is probably worth more than that.

Use the handy order mailer to send us your check or money order. Within a week after you mail it, you'll be able to cut, trim, and gather up the grass on your lawn in only one easy, time-saving Multimowing.

The letter to a dealer stresses the same points, to show why he can expect sales to his customers; but it does so more rapidly and concisely, in order to concentrate on sales aids, price spreads, promptness and regularity of supply, and service as parts of the profit-making picture.

Certainly, of necessity, a dealer is habitually more money-conscious than the average consumer. And his reasons for buying are more complex. He may be more rational in his evaluation of a product than a consumer and probably is more critical. But the approach is the same as in any sales letters: It seeks the answer to the ever-present question, "What will it do for me?" To a dealer, the answer is always "profits"; but profits depend on salability (the features of the product that cause people to buy), on serviceability, and on the markup. A dealer is also interested in promptness and regularity of filling his orders, and in your guarantee and service arrangements.

When you show a customer a Multimower, a lawn mower completely new in design and principle, which cuts and trims a lawn in one operation, you have a quick sale, a satisfied customer, and a \$10.45 profit.

Men like the Multimower because it gives them more time to spend in enjoyable summer recreation. It cuts right up to walls, fences, trees, and flower beds and thus eliminates the need for hand trimming in spots not reached by the ordinary mower. Its easily adjustable cutting-height regulator and self-sharpening cutters that slice down the toughest kinds of grass, dandelions, and weeds will assure them of having a trim, neat lawn in half the time they've formerly spent.

Both men and women like the Multimower because its light weight—only  $8\frac{1}{4}$  pounds—means easy pushing. The quiet operation of the interlocking cutters has won approval of 8,000 Multimower users. They like it, too, because it is permanently lubricated. With a minimum of care it's always ready for use.

No doubt many of your customers have been reading about the Multimower in the full-page, four-color monthly ads that started running in the *Saturday Evening Post* in March and will continue through July. A reprint, along with testimonials and conditions of our guarantee, appears on the next page. Note the favorable guarantee and servicing arrangements.

In these days of high prices, the \$29.95 retail cost of the Multimower will be popular with your customers. Our price to you, including shipping charges, is \$19.50.

By filling out and returning the enclosed order blank along with your remittance today, you'll be sure to have Multimowers on hand when your customers begin asking for them.

The significant points to keep in mind are summarized in the appended check list on pages 658-59.

## Tests and Testing

You will probably recall that earlier in this chapter we referred to testing a mailing and to the returns or the pull or the pulling power of a letter. Testing means simply mailing the letter to a portion of the names on your list to see whether you can get the necessary percentage of people to take the action you want.

But, unless your sample is big enough and unless you carefully control conditions so that you test only one factor at once, you won't have any reliable evidence.

Most tests that have been made have been on sales letters (though a little has been done on collections). You can see why a businessman would be wise to test a mailing before risking his money sending 10,000 letters, especially if the mailing pieces are expensive.

One reason for testing is simply to find out whether the mailing will be profitable. Suppose your mailing pieces cost 10 cents each (not unusual in a mass mailing) and you make \$1 on each sale. Obviously, you have to make sales to 10 per cent of the list to break even. Now suppose you have a 90 per cent accuracy factor (that is, the percentage of correct addresses). Each 100 letters have to bring 10 orders from every 90 people to whom they are delivered. Further suppose the purity (how many names on the list are likely prospects instead of deadwoods) is 70 per cent. That means that your 100 letters have to bring 10 orders from every 63 good prospects (70 per cent of 90). That requires about 16 per cent pulling power from your letter ( $1\frac{1}{3}\%$ ). Most sales letters don't do that well. But you could change the situation into one that would be more likely to be profitable by increasing any or all of the accuracy, the purity, or the pulling power—or by decreasing costs of the mailing or increasing the margin of profit on the sale.

Faced with the prospect of a required 16 per cent, you'd probably do some revising of plans in order to lower it. And then, to be on the safe side, you'd mail your proposed mailing to a part of your list. On very large mailings the percentage is small—5 per cent or less. Most experienced mail salesmen will use about a 10–20 per cent random sample. If the replies from the sample meet the necessary percentage figures for profitable operations, you'll go ahead. If they don't, you'll revise or drop the whole plan without losing as much money as you would have if you hadn't tested.

Another reason for testing is to find out which of two messages has the greater pull or which of two times (day or week or month the mailing piece arrives) is more profitable. *But you can test only one factor at a time!*

You can test one color against another; but if you vary size, copy, or time, your test doesn't mean a thing. You can test position of coupon or order blank versus order card; but if you allow any variation of other factors, your findings are not reliable. You can test one lead against another; but if the rest of the copy, the color and size of the paper, the envelope and stamp, and the time of arrival are not the same, you still have no basis for saying that one lead is better than the other.

Many test results have been published concerning format and timing. If you talked with enough people in the field or read long enough, you'd be reassured—often vehemently!—that every color you've ever seen is the best color for a mailing. You'd find one man swearing by third-class mail and another at it. You'd find out, however, what all experienced people with judgment discover: Because people and circumstances constantly change, so do the results of

testing; what is suggested by a test this week may not be true next week and probably will not be next year; the only way to be safe is to test in each new situation and then follow through as fast as you can.

Even so, you usually expect only 5–10 per cent pulling power. But especially effective copy, carefully selected mailing lists, or unusual offers often increase these percentages. And, obviously, the reverse of these conditions decreases the pulling power sharply.

Because some series depend on large volume and succeed on small margins, even such apparently insignificant things as the time of arrival are important. Experience has shown that such letters should not arrive in an office at the beginning or ending of a week or month or at the homes of laborers or farmers in the middle of the week. Around Christmas time and April 15 (income-tax time) are especially bad times of the year. In general, the fall and winter months are better than spring or summer. Of course, seasonal appropriateness of the goods and geographical locations can easily affect this. Even temporary local conditions may.

By keeping careful records on the tests and on the whole mailing, through the years users develop a considerable quantity of experience data that may help guide them in future work.

Before you accept conclusions, however, know the circumstances back of the quoted figures. The results may be worth no more than the paper they're written on; but they may be reliable.

## Writing Sales Series

The sales letters we have been discussing are lone efforts to produce or promote sales. Because single sales letters usually cannot do all the work that a series can, probably *just as many* or more sales letters are sent as part of series as are sent singly. Usually they are obviously processed (form) letters, sent out in large numbers by third-class mail. For further economy, they use some simulated address block instead of an inside address and salutation (like some of the examples in this chapter). By careful phrasing, however, a skillful writer will often succeed in making the one reader of each copy forget the form and feel that he is getting something of a personalized message.

Whether a letter is a single sales letter or one in a series makes little difference in the techniques or preliminary planning, but in one type of series the letter's organization is made more complicated. There are three important types of sales series:

1. The wear-out series
2. The campaign series
3. The continuous series

**The Wear-Out Series.** Probably the most widely used of sales series is the wear-out series. In it each mailing is a complete sales presentation sent to a large group by almost any firm with a relatively inexpensive product to sell (usually \$1-\$15). The product almost has to be inexpensive, because one letter cannot hope to succeed in persuading most people to buy expensive items by mail from a complete stranger.

After the market analysis, preparation or purchase of a mailing list, and preliminary planning, comes writing the letter. Probably you and several other executives, and perhaps a letter consultant, will spend hours preparing the letter, or several versions of it. These first few copies may cost several hundred dollars in time and consultant's fees.

Then you test your list, and perhaps several versions of the letter (as formerly explained). If one letter seems to have the best pulling power (and that is high enough to make it profitable), you run off hundreds or thousands of copies, as the size of the mailing list requires, and mail them out at a carefully selected time. Now that the big investment has been divided among so many, the cost per letter is not so big (maybe 10-25 cents).

After an interval usually of one to three weeks, you remove the names of purchasers (unless the product has frequent recurring demand) and send another letter (or sometimes the same one) to the remaining names. Sometimes the second or even the third or fourth mailing brings better results than the first, even with the same letter, because of the buildup of impact.

You continue to repeat the mailings as long as the returns pay you a suitable profit on your mailings—that is, until the effectiveness of the list is worn out.

**The Campaign Series.** What has been said about the cost of the first copy, the general preliminary planning, the testing, and the usual interval between mailings of the wear-out series also applies to the campaign series. But there the similarity stops.

Contrary to the wear-out series, the campaign series is preplanned not only for the construction of the letters and the intervals between them; you decide, before you start, how many mailings you will send and how long the whole series will run. It is also different in that it is used mostly to sell or to help sell rather expensive items.

That fact (cost of product) really determines its nature. The theory is that people buy some (usually inexpensive) items quickly, without much thought. Those things can be sold by one good complete sales letter, as in the wear-out series. But before buying certain other types of items (usually more expensive, but not absolutely essential), most people ponder for a month or more and talk over the situation with friends, financial advisers, and other members of the family. To

send a letter which first introduced such an item and, after only two minutes of reading time, asked for the decision on an order card would be to pour money down the proverbial rat hole. The reader would laugh at you. Instead of the wear-out, you would use the campaign series for such a situation. Your action requests (at least in the first few mailings) are to get a show of interest: write for more information, come to a showroom, authorize the visit of a salesman. You usually do not talk price in the earlier mailings and sometimes not at all.

Having done your preliminary planning as explained, you are ready to plan the series. You decide approximately how long most people on the mailing list would want to think over your offer before making up their minds. Then you decide how frequently they should be reminded to keep them thinking about your product or service. On that basis you decide how many mailings you want to send for the whole span of time, the whole series.

Some campaigns correspond to the parts of a sales presentation. Each of the letters emphasizes a particular phase but does not omit the action step ever—just in case some readers may be sold without the full treatment.

The essence of planning the series of letters is to make the whole series cover the parts of a complete sales presentation and knit them together. The series may include from two to a dozen mailings, or even more. In any case, the first letter will try hard to get attention and start working at interesting the prospect. Further letters will develop the succeeding steps in the selling procedure until the last makes a strong drive for action.

The last is not the only one, however, to which a reader can easily respond. Mail salesmen know that they will not usually get any action from more than half of their prospects. But they also know that in almost any large group there are some who will be sold on the first contact. Consequently, they usually provide handy return order forms with almost every mailing.

***The Continuous Series.*** The wear-out and campaign series are different in many ways, but they are much more like each other than like the continuous series. Both the wear-out and the campaign series are usually complete sales presentations which try to bring in orders. The continuous series rarely does. Instead of being used by almost any kind of firm, the continuous series is most frequently used by department stores as a good-will or sales-promotion medium rather than a direct-mail selling system. The mailing list for the continuous series is usually the list of the firm's charge customers, instead of one specially prepared in view of a market analysis for the particular item or service being sold. The continuous series usually costs little or no postage because it is sent with the monthly state-

ments; so the usual interval between mailings is longest in the continuous series. Still perhaps the biggest distinction is the rigid planning of the campaign series as compared with the hit-or-miss, hap-hazard nature of the continuous series. It commonly includes special mailings at Easter and Christmas but also on almost any other special occasion the sales manager chooses. As such, it does not run for any set length of time or for any definite number of mailings; and it may *promote* a great variety of products while the campaign and wear-out series are *selling one*.



The following direct-mail campaign directed to accounting firms, tax services, and law firms emphasizes the economy of making dry photocopies instantly with an Adeco Auto-Copier (costing about \$350) instead of having papers and carbons manually typed. Though planned for firms in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, the letters could just as well be sent within one city or over the entire country. A salesman within a city could readily assemble his mailing list from the yellow pages of the phone book. The Atlanta district manager (for the three states) could assemble his list also from the yellow pages of phone books for the cities in his area (available in any large library, such as the Atlanta Public Library). Or he could buy the list. Certainly a nation-wide mailing list would be more inexpensively purchased than assembled.

The mailings are planned for intervals of about three weeks. For economy they use a simulated address block instead of an inside address and salutation, are printed, and go third class. Each mailing includes a reply card which reads something like this:

Adeco

Auto-Copier

Yes, I would like to know more about how the Adeco Auto-Copier will help me. Please call me and arrange an appointment.

The card provides blanks for indicating name of individual, position, company, and address.

The first mailing includes a 12-page, two-color booklet containing illustrations, savings estimates and comparisons, and information about the company and its organization.

You can save  
Up to 80% on  
Copying jobs . . .

. . . by letting your typists make black and white photocopies with the Adeco Auto-Copier.

In less than 45 seconds an unskilled operator can turn out a legally acceptable, error-proof copy of an original—one that would take your typist at least ten minutes to copy manually. If your office pro-

duces only fifteen copies a day, the Auto-Copier can save you about \$3 each working day. When you need to turn out large numbers of copies, the Auto-Copier makes them for you as fast as 75 an hour, at proportionate savings.

Your Auto-Copier takes a picture without using a camera. So in turning out copies of complicated tax forms, accounting forms, government records, and deeds, it assures you of error-proof, smudge-proof copies. One compact photocopy unit does it all; the Auto-Copier is a fully automatic, continuous copier and processing unit combined. Since prints are processed and dried automatically, they're ready for your instant use.

And you don't need a separate timer or printer, either. In just two simple steps you can turn out prints made from any original up to 11" by 17" whether printed on one or two sides.

Just put the Auto-Copier on any convenient desk or table, plug it in, and you're ready to start. You can copy any confidential material right in the privacy of your own office in just a few seconds. Read the description in the enclosed folder of the Auto-Copier's easy, simple operation.

The Auto-Copier will actually enable you to have one unskilled clerk do the copying work of six expert typists. Just sign and return the enclosed card so that your Adeco representative can stop by and show you how to let the Auto-Copier cut the high cost of duplicating records.

(Signature)

Auto-Copier copies of tax forms are fully acceptable and approved by the Internal Revenue Department.

The second letter accompanies a 4-page, two-color folder, headlined "Make dry photocopies of tax returns instantly!" In the upper left corner of the letter appears the picture of a girl operating an Auto-Copier. To the right of the illustration is the headline

MAKE  
TAX RETURN COPIES  
INSTANTLY  
with the Adeco Auto-Copier.

Now your typists can  
Turn out tax return  
Copies in just a few seconds!

Tax copying work which used to take hours you can now do in seconds with the Adeco Auto-Copier. And these copies are fully accepted and approved by the Internal Revenue Department.

You can actually reduce by one-third to one-half the number of statistical typists which you employ. Since the average statistical typist in this area makes about \$60 a week, you'll be able to save \$20

each week for each one you now employ. Or your typists can use the time saved to get out your other important papers and reports.

You know how difficult it is to type tax copies speedily, align them accurately, and avoid carbon smudges. With the Auto-Copier, you need to type and proofread only the original, then turn out error-proof, clean, legible copies at a rate as high as 75 an hour—copies that your typists never have to align, erase, or proofread.

And on involved legal reports or contracts you'll find your Auto-Copier especially helpful. Whether your paper is opaque or translucent, you are assured of clear copies, and you can reproduce copies on both sides of a single sheet, too.

Eliminate the expensive, time-consuming job of manually copying tax returns in your office. Whether you're working on state or federal tax forms, corporation or individual, you can get the copies out three times as fast with the Auto-Copier. Just sign and return the enclosed card so that your Adeco representative can come by and show you all the ways you can use an Auto-Copier.

(Signature)

Turn to page 4 of the enclosed folder and note the three simple steps in making tax-return copies.

Letter No. 3, accompanied by a 1-page folder, drives for a demonstration (with the post card altered in wording accordingly):

When you need copies . . .

. . . of tax forms, accounting records, government forms, or letters, you can be confident that any made on the Auto-Copier will be as clear, unsmudged, and error-proof as the original. No more faulty copies because of poor alignment or carbons that are too light to use. And your copies are turned out from three to ten times as fast as carbons ever can be.

The average typist, even the good typist, is hard pressed to turn out in one hour even six perfect copies of a tax return or many other government forms that the average business has to produce. The Auto-Copier can turn out 75 perfect copies. And no proofreading or corrections are necessary.

Your Auto-Copier takes up no more space than a standard typewriter. Just plug it in, and your typist is ready to copy. Because the Auto-Copier is completely electric, you can do all your copying work automatically from start to finish.

Try the Auto-Copier for a week. We'll be glad to bring one around for you to see how easily it will fit many of your copying needs. Fill in and return the enclosed card so that your Adeco representative can demonstrate in your office its value to you and your company.

(Signature)

Notice Auto-Copier's other exclusive advantages described in the enclosure.

The fourth letter shows an attractive young woman turning out copies on the Auto-Copier. She looks directly at the reader and addresses him:

I've typed thousands  
of tax returns.

And I *know* the Adeco Auto-Copier can save you money because it can reduce your tax copying work up to 80%.

For two years I have typed tax forms in the offices of C. C. Putman, C.P.A., 166 Stallings Building, Atlanta.

Turning out an original copy of a complicated tax form is a job in itself, but typing ten or twelve clear, unsmudged carbon copies is next to impossible.

Now just a minute! I'm not a poor typist. I can type 60 words a minute with no errors on a ten-minute test. That is certainly as good as the average typist, and I believe, confidently, a lot better. But I still have trouble aligning carbons, making corrections, and typing sufficiently clear and legible copies.

With the Auto-Copier I simply type the original and run off as many copies as I need. Reports that used to take at least two days to prepare I can now turn out in one day. Each detail of the original is accurately and legibly reproduced—and the only copy I have to proofread is the original!

Our clients like Auto-Copied forms. And they're fully accepted by the government.

In addition to tax form copies, I use the Auto-Copier for letters, bank records, claims, graphs, or invoices. No more costly retyping or hand copying! And no more messy, time-consuming carbons!

My employer and I agree that the Auto-Copier is the answer to our copying needs. Your Adeco representative would like to show you how the Auto-Copier can solve your copying problems, too. Check the enclosed card today so that he can call on you to demonstrate one in your office.

The letter carries the signature of the young woman, the title indicating that she is secretary to Mr. Putnam.

The fifth mailing re-establishes the main talking points and stresses much harder the advantages of having the salesman come in and demonstrate:

Can your typists turn out  
75 perfect copies an hour?  
With the Auto-Copier they can!

The Auto-Copier will enable you to have one unskilled clerk do the copying work of six expert typists.

In addition, you are assured of perfect accuracy—each detail of the original is accurately reproduced without any possibility of error. And there's no need for tedious, time-consuming proofreading and checking, either.

In turning out copies of complicated tax forms, legal reports and records, and accounting data on the Auto-Copier, your typist can run off up to 20 clear, unsmudged copies in no more than five minutes. Since she can't make errors on Auto-Copied material, erasing time and messiness are eliminated.

You can put your Auto-Copier on any convenient desk or table, since it measures 20" x 11". You simply plug it in, and you're ready to start using it. No special installation is necessary. Anyone can run it.

Since Auto-Copies are processed and dried automatically, they're ready for your instant use. You need no developing, washing, drying, or printing space because the Auto-Copier does everything in one simple operation.

Your Auto-Copier representative would like to talk with you about your particular copying needs. He'll also show you how other companies are using Auto-Copier to help cut copying costs. Just sign and mail the enclosed card and he will call to arrange a demonstration in your office.

The sixth mailing is a copy of the first letter, with a reminder memo attached.

Mailing No. 7 is the booklet sent with the first letter. Attached to the booklet is a memo in simulated handwriting:

If you didn't get a chance to read the first copy of the booklet I sent you recently, here's another.

It will show you how the Auto-Copier can help you cut the high cost of duplicating records.

Of course the reply card is also enclosed.

The eighth and final mailing is another memo, this time attached to the same folder that accompanied the second letter:

You can make photocopies of tax forms instantly with the Auto-Copier. Notice in the enclosed folder the three easy steps necessary to turn out tax-return copies fully acceptable to the Internal Revenue Department.

To find out how the Auto-Copier can lighten your tax-copying problems, return the enclosed card.

This next campaign, directed to gift shops, seeks to get owners or managers to stock Jense stainless-steel tableware. A list could be

purchased easily. With time (lots of it if the mailing were extensive), it could be assembled from classified directories. Since the product is relatively new, the firm offers to sell on consignment. Because of that factor, for safety the list has to be checked for credit reliability, and the contractual phrasing of the order blank assumes greater significance.

The first mailing early in September is a box containing a sample spoon of Jense and a price list of the line. The envelope attached to the box by a wire contains the following letter and a reply card requesting more information:

100% markup—  
And it sells itself!

Take this sample of Jense stainless-steel tableware and compare it with any tableware—either in your shop or in some competitor's.

It compares favorably in style, quality, and workmanship. It gives your customers more value at a lower price. It's durable and easy to keep. So more and more homemakers today are choosing Jense as their best.

When your customers inquire about Jense, invite them to make the same comparisons you have made. Tell them how durable Jense is because it contains 35% nickel, the highest nickel content in stainless-steel tableware. The homemaker of today does not have to be concerned when her maid or children carelessly handle her Jense, because it will not bend.

Your customers will like the small amount of care Jense requires. It needs no polishing; it won't discolor or tarnish. Soap and water are all that are needed to retain its lustre. Because Jense requires only a minimum of care, it fits right in with today's living that stresses ease and informality.

The low cost of Jense is a good talking point too. Glance over the price list we sent you. Notice that a spoon like the one we sent you costs your customer only \$1.40 and that place settings of six in any of the four graceful patterns run to only \$8. And remember that on every place setting of Jense tableware you sell, you make a profit of \$4.

Jot down your name and address in the blanks on the enclosed reply card and mail it today for more information about Jense—the graceful, inexpensive, durable stainless-steel tableware that your homemaker customers will buy when you put it on display.

The second mailing is a letter, a folder, an order blank, and reply envelope. The 4-page folder illustrates in color a table place setting in each of the four Jense patterns. These are the same photographs as those appearing in current magazine advertising and are identified as such in the letter. Letter copy stresses the adaptability of Jense to conventional or modern surroundings, to informal or formal enter-

taining. Of course, it asks for an order. It goes immediately to any dealer who responds to the first mailing; others on the list receive it about two weeks after the first mailing.

About a month after the second mailing (the middle of October), the third mailing goes to all names on the list—whether they have bought or not. A 4" × 6" memo to the dealer is folded over an 8½" × 11" letter, which is a copy of a consumer sales letter about Jense. The memo reads:

Here's one way

We help you

Push your sales

Of Jense.

The enclosed letter is written just for your customers. It stresses the versatility, easy upkeep, low cost, and extensiveness of Jense.

There's space at the bottom of the letter for you or someone else in your store to sign, and room for a personalizing postscript if you want to add one. All you have to do is mail the letter.

Any items you check on the enclosed order blank will be sent to you within 24 hours after we receive it.

And we'll send you whatever number of letters you specify plus the same number of the leaflets referred to in the letter.

When the dealer lifts the memo, he reads this letter, which is already prepared for his local distribution:

Made especially

For today's busy,

Discriminating hostess.

Whether you prefer traditional or modern surroundings, you can set your table with Jense and have a harmonious setting with beauty and charm.

The painstaking craftsmanship and the new techniques of hand polishing and finishing are combined to give you a tableware beautifully balanced for adaptability and harmony. For informal luncheons or buffets, Jense will complement your arrangement and give it freshness and beauty. And the simplicity of Jense's design will add elegance and distinctiveness to your formal table settings.

In preparation for your parties, you do not have to polish your Jense. Since it is tarnish-proof, its lustre lasts for a lifetime. Just wash it with soap and water, and it will always look its loveliest on your table.

You can have a six-piece Jense place setting for only \$8—a minimum investment for quality tableware that you will use on any occasion in the years to come.

With Jense you can also have hollowware in the same pattern as your flatware. Notice in the enclosed leaflet the hollowware that

matches each of the four distinctive Jense patterns. And remember that all of this permanently polished stainless-steel tableware is equally at home on your table or in the oven.

Come in soon and choose the pattern especially suited to you.

Around the middle of November the fourth letter (order blank and reply envelope included) stresses the idea of Jense for Christmas shoppers. It is worded so that it can be sent to any dealer on the list, whether or not he has already stocked Jense.

Let Christmas gifts of Jense

Increase Christmas sales for you.

When one of your customers enters your store "just looking around" for Christmas, show her a place setting of Jense.

Tell her how durable Jense is because it contains the highest nickel content in stainless-steel tableware. Remember to point out to her how pleased any owner of Jense is, since this tableware needs no polishing, only soap and water, to retain its satin lustre.

Let her see the four lovely, versatile patterns of flatware and the matching patterns in hollowware which will please any of her friends on Christmas morning and in the years to come.

And when you point out to her that Jense goes from the oven right to the table, she'll see how practical it is too.

You can get your Jense in plenty of time for the peak of the Christmas trade by filling out and mailing the enclosed order blank today.

In view of the Christmas buying season and end-of-the-year activities claiming the attention of shop owners and managers through January, the fifth mailing does not go out until shortly after the first of February. It is a letter with folder, order blank, and reply envelope.

The newest trend

In tableware for

American women . . .

. . . who for years have wanted flatware and hollowware in companion pieces!

Today they can make their table arrangements blend harmoniously when they use Jense flatware and the matching hollowware in the same pattern. That is why an increasing number of American hostesses are setting their tables with Jense stainless-steel tableware in

Fayette—elegant and distinctive

Phoebe—contemporary simplicity with classic charm

Flora—for contemporary or traditional surroundings

Phellips—unadorned modern for today's casual mood

as illustrated in the folder enclosed.

You can offer your customers any of these patterns in more than 200 different pieces. Whether they want a gravy boat, a pickle fork, or a 36" tray, they can get it in their chosen pattern of Jense. And every article is sold with a printed guarantee issued by Jense.

Any of your customers will delight in using this heat-proof hollowware that they can put right into the oven to keep warm before serving. And like the flatware, it is tarnish-proof—it never requires polishing, only soap and water.

Right now, take time to designate on the enclosed order blank that you'd like to try Jense—on consignment, if you prefer.

Approximately a month later (about the middle of March), the sixth mailing stresses the appropriateness of Jense as a choice for brides—a reminder of the coming spring and summer buying for brides. It is a letter and order blank with reply envelope. Note that it is so worded that it can go to any dealer's name on the original list.

Today's American bride  
Is choosing Jense tableware

Because

It is practical, beautifully designed, inexpensive—and made to last a lifetime.

Today's brides who must be homemakers and career girls have to budget their time as well as their money. Jense helps them do both.

They can use their Jense stainless-steel tableware twice a day or oftener with the complete assurance that it needs no polishing—only soap and water to retain its lustre.

A display of each of the four distinctive patterns will be an invitation to all brides to visit your store. Pieces of the hollowware in the matching patterns and a reminder that they go right from the oven to the table convince women that never before has a homemaker been able to do so much with one set of tableware. Whether buffet or formal dinner—family or special occasion—they can use their Jense to make a beautiful, distinctive arrangement that both their young friends and traditional-minded mothers approve.

Any bride today can afford Jense, and she'll use and cherish it the rest of her life. Even though this stainless-steel tableware contains more nickel than any other she could select, she can choose her pattern in a six-piece place setting for eight for \$64, as compared to the \$250 she would spend for the same thing in sterling. And the bride's friends will be pleased at the economical price range of her choice.

Make this spring the season to promote Jense. Use the enclosed order blank and easy-reply envelope to tell us the quantity you want.

(Signature)

You can assure your customers that the patterns they choose will never be out of stock—they can buy any piece in the pattern of their choice to replace or increase their Jense in the years to come.

The seventh and final planned mailing is sent about a month after the sixth mailing (roughly, the middle of April). But it could go almost any time. It is a carbon copy of the letter sent in the fifth mailing—with order blank, price list, and reply envelope. Clipped to the carbon is a memo 4" X 5" reading:

100% markup!

And it sells itself.

This carbon of a letter we sent you earlier is a reminder of why American women buy Jense tableware:

It is the only stainless-steel tableware with matching flatware and hollowware.

It never needs polishing.

It's equally at home on the table or in the oven.

The four distinctive patterns give them a freedom of choice for tableware adaptable to any occasion.

The price list tells you why Jense is a popular choice of every homemaker. Use the order blank and reply envelope to tell us the Jense you'd like to stock.

## X. Persuasive Messages: Collections

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Defects of Old-Style Collection Letters

Attitudes and Objectives of Modern Collection Writers

Characteristics of the Collection Series

Standard Collection Procedures

Notification

Reminder

Inquiry

Appeals

Basic Considerations

The Resale Appeal

Pride Appeal

Fair-Play Appeal

Appeals to Economic Self-Interest

Urgency

Ultimatum

Collecting Unearned Discounts

Humor in Collections

Legal Dangers in Collections

Beginnings and Endings

THE ONLY sure way to prevent collection problems is to sell strictly for cash. Even with the most careful selection of credit customers, the credit manager (who is usually in charge of collections too) will make an occasional mistake and will allow credit sales to somebody who will not pay promptly.

Unfortunately, however, strict cash selling is also an almost sure way to keep sales and profits unnecessarily low. For that reason, the old battle among the salesman who wanted to sell to everybody, the credit man who would approve sales only to gilt-edged credit risks, and the collection man who insisted on prompt pay regardless of consequences has ended in compromise. Today the thinking salesman accepts the fact that there is no profit if you can't collect; so he does not even try to sell unless there is a reasonably good chance of collection, and he helps the credit man find out about the chances. The credit man accepts the fact that every sale he turns down for credit reasons is a lost chance for more profit; so he approves sales to some marginal credit risks. And the collection man remembers that

he not only must collect the money but must retain the good will of customers, or he will drive them away as fast as the sales department can bring them in. Indeed, modern credit theory stresses selling to marginal risks as a means of increasing sales and profits. If a businessman follows that theory, as most do these days, his collection problems will be numerous—but expected.

### Defects of Old-Style Collection Letters

In the early days of credit sales, things were different. Only the best risks could get credit. When one of them did not pay promptly, the businessman was surprised, disappointed in his trusted customer, and irked because his bookkeeping routine was broken. The letters he wrote to collect the money revealed all these emotions. Combined with stock letter-writing phrases, these emotions led to letters characterized by curt, exasperated, injured, accusing, or self-righteous tone, jargon, strong-arm methods, and ineffective appeals to sympathy, fear of getting one's nose smashed, and fear of legal suit.

That is the kind of letter *Time* referred to as "breaking into tears in the first paragraph and yelling for the law in the second." Such letters have caused many people to feel like the man who explained, in response to one of them, that he shuffled his bills and drew six for payment each month, but that further impudence would cause the creditor to be left out of the shuffle next time. The unpleasant tone, jargon, and strong-arm technique were known even to the laundress who "begged to advise" a lawyer that he owed her \$6 and that if he didn't pay before the next wash she would put too much starch in his collars.

Indeed, such letters are still sent by businessmen who learned all they know about letter writing years ago only by reading and imitating the poor letters of others and who have never bothered since to learn more modern and effective ways. With some exceptions, collection correspondence is still a notorious blind spot in business. Besides the old faults, all too frequently collectors send obvious form letters to collect long-overdue accounts where a form hardly has a chance, or write many short letters when a good one, only a paragraph or two longer than the first, would do the job. They then defend themselves by claiming that they don't have time or money to spend on individualized letters or long letters or by saying (without testing to find out) that debtors won't read long letters. In tests that have been made, the longer letters nearly always pulled better than the shorter ones, and individual-sounding letters always pulled better than obvious forms in collecting accounts that were very long overdue. The apparent reason is that in the longer letters you can present enough evidence and reasoning to be persuasive.

The several-poor-letters plan delays collections and leaves the

business to be financed through borrowing instead of through current collections. One of the main values of promptness is therefore lost. The loss, however, is a small consideration in comparison with the main shortcoming of poor collection correspondence—its disposition to drive away customers that the sales department has brought in only at great expense for advertising and sales promotion. Here are two recent examples:

We are trying to avoid getting impatient over your delay in settling your account amounting to \$124.60. The amount is considerably past due, and your failure to answer our letters (all of which we believe have been polite) has been very annoying as well as discourteous. If you cannot pay the account in full, we should be pleased to be favored with your remittance for part of the amount with approximate date for payment of balance.

Trusting that you will give the above your prompt attention, and with kindest regards,

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You have classified yourself by failure to answer our letter Re: Olympia Clinic Acct., \$8.00. It is therefore our intention to seek other means of collection of this account as we do not intend to let you beat it if at all possible to prevent. We beg to advise that fees for medical services are held by court to be a necessity. So remember, the time to settle a debt is before it gets into court.

It will be to your benefit to communicate with this office at once.

You notice that the only reason given for payment in either of those letters is the implied threat to sue (for \$8?) in the second. Such letters increase the difficulty of collecting because they make the reader hate to pay someone he so thoroughly dislikes, and they incense him so that he never wants to do business with the writer again. Frequently the results are:

1. A series of costly collection letters, when one good one would do the job.
2. Final collection only by forcing disgusted customers to pay.
3. Permanent loss of many customers.
4. The unfavorable attitudes passed on by these customers to others.

That's a high price for any firm to pay for keeping a poor collection man—higher than necessary to employ a good one.

### **Attitudes and Objectives of Modern Collection Writers**

Modern collection theory and methods are designed to prevent those undesirable consequences. The trained collection man takes the attitude that the debtor should pay because he promised to by a certain date and the time has come. So a collector need never apologize

about asking for his money; he has every right to ask for money due him.

In asking, however, he realizes that people pay because of benefits to themselves rather than sympathy for the collector, or any other reason. He therefore not only associates the obligation with the goods through resale talk, but, in persuading the debtor, he points out the benefits of paying now rather than letting the account drag on.

Evidently the modern collection man approaches his job with quite a different attitude from that of his early predecessor. He is not surprised by a delinquency. He knows that most people who do not pay promptly are still honest and that they will pay soon. He knows that some are in temporary financial difficulty and need only a little more time. So he avoids the curt tone. He is not hurt or disappointed as if he were being let down by a trusted friend. So he avoids the injured, pouting tone. He is not the bookkeeper irked by a broken routine. So he avoids the tone of exasperation and self-righteousness. He knows that some delinquents are withholding payment because of dissatisfaction with the goods or charges and that the problem is really one of adjustment rather than collection. He knows that some will have to be persuaded to pay. And he knows that a few—but only a few—are basically dishonest and will have to be forced to pay or marked off as losses; but he realizes that threats of physical violence are illegal and threats of suit destroy good will. Still most important of all, the modern collector (unlike his predecessors) recognizes the true nature of his job.

The trained writer of collection letters today expects his letters to do *two* jobs:

1. They must collect the money, promptly if possible; but
2. They must also retain the good will of the customer if at all possible.

By adding the second job, the collector retains the customer, prevents the unfavorable publicity inevitably carried by a disgruntled former customer, and makes his letter more likely to succeed in its first job—that of collecting. In many cases the second job is more important than the first. Certainly it would be bad business to collect \$4.50 by means that lose the good will of a customer who has been buying hundreds of dollars' worth of goods a year.

If the collector has to sacrifice anything, he will yield promptness the most willingly. Yet, in so doing, he is taking four kinds of losses or at least the risk of them:

1. Use of the money for the additional time it is outstanding.
2. Costs of further collection efforts.
3. Additional purchases which may be added to the account be-

fore it is closed (and thus will increase the loss if the account is uncollectible).

4. Loss of sales. Customers with overdue accounts commonly trade elsewhere rather than face the embarrassment of buying where they owe money.

To his major objectives, the collector will hang on grimly. If he finds later that he has to give up one of them, he will usually give up good will first, unless the amount due is small and the customer a large-volume purchaser. Sometimes he has to give up even his main objective—collection—but he will not do so without a considerable struggle unless the amount is so small that even the trouble of suing would be worth more in time and effort than would be collected.

For effectiveness in both collection and good will, the modern collector co-operates with the sales department because he knows that both sales and collections are essential to the ultimate objectives of the business—profits. As in acknowledgments of orders, he may even inject some sales-promotion material into *early* collection letters to a good risk, when he feels that it might be of interest to the customer. It not only promotes future sales, but it shows the debtor that the firm still trusts him and is willing for him to buy more on credit. Thus it is a subtle appeal to pride which helps to save the reader's face and his good will. If used at the end of the letter, it relieves the sting and solves one of the correspondent's touchiest problems—how to provide a pleasant ending for a letter in which some element is displeasing to the customer.

Even when resale is not the basic collection appeal (as discussed later), the collection man introduces into his letters a few phrases of resale talk to keep the customer convinced that he made a wise decision in buying *those goods* from *that firm* AND to make the obligation to pay concrete by attaching it to the goods. The following letter includes both resale and sales-promotion talk:

You probably remember your first feeling of pleasure when you saw the dark, gleaming wood and the beautifully proportioned design of the Heppelwaite bedroom suite you bought here a few months ago. The suite was one of the finest we have ever had in our store, and we were well pleased—as we thought you were—when you selected it for your home.

At the time you purchased your furniture, we were glad to arrange convenient credit terms for you so that you could have your furniture while you were paying for it. Now if you will look over your bills, you will notice that those for October, November, and December have not been marked paid. The sooner you take care of them, the more you can enjoy your furniture because each time you use it or even see it you will subconsciously remember that you are up to date on your payments.

When you come to the store to make your payments, be sure to see the Home-furnishings Department as well as the Time-payment desk. An entire new line of curtains, slip covers, bedspreads, and scatter rugs is there for your inspection. There are all colors and fabrics made up in the latest styles. From the wide selection, you can choose a beautiful new setting for your Heppelwaite suite.

That letter pretty well exemplifies the attitudes and objectives of modern collection writers: Ask for the money without apology because it is due, persuade by showing the reader benefits to himself, use calm understanding and patience, collect but retain good will, and co-operate with the sales department.

### Characteristics of the Collection Series

In trying to attain his objectives of collecting and retaining good will, the efficient collector classifies delinquent accounts and prescribes the best treatment for each. The method he employs may be compared to a process of repeated siftings or screenings. The procedure is a series of mailings, each of which eliminates some from the delinquent list and aids in reclassifying and prescribing for those remaining.

To do its two jobs best, the collection series should have the following characteristics:

1. *Promptness.* It is a well-established fact among credit and collection men that the sooner they start trying to collect after an account becomes due, the better the chance. The U.S. Department of Commerce has found that a dollar in current accounts is worth only 90¢ after two months, 67¢ after six months, 45¢ after a year, 23¢ at two years, 15¢ at three years, and 1¢ at five years.
2. *Regularity.* Not only does systematic handling of a collection problem increase office efficiency, but it has a desirable effect on the debtor. He sees quickly that he is not going to slip through the holes of inefficiency in a haphazard collection procedure.
3. *Increasing forcefulness.* Since the collector wants to retain the good will of the customer as well as collect the money, he starts with as weak a letter as he thinks will work. Like the doctor who uses stronger and stronger medicine or resorts to surgery only as the need develops, the collector applies more and more forceful methods. He resorts to the court only after weaker methods have failed.
4. *Adaptation.* Not all credit and collection men classify their customers into the clean-cut categories of good, medium, and poor risks suggested by some books; but all competent ones vary their procedures according to the quality of the risk (as well as accord-

ing to the general bases of adaptation already discussed). Usually the poorer the risk, the more frequent the mailings and the more forceful the messages. Whereas three months might pass before anything stronger than a few statements is sent to a good risk, much less time might be used to run a poor one through the whole sifting process and bring him to court.

5. *Flexibility.* The collection procedure has to be flexible to take care of unusual circumstances. The collector would look silly to continue sending letters every fifteen days to a man who had answered an early one with the message that an automobile accident had thrown him financially two months behind but that he would pay the bill by a certain date. After all you can't get blood out of a turnip.

### Standard Collection Procedures

The exact plan of a collection series varies according to circumstances. Also, various collection theorists and practitioners use different terms to mean essentially the same things. Most well-planned series, however, are based on a screening process somewhat like that shown in the accompanying tabulation:

| Stage            | Assumption                                     | Nature                                                                                                           | Gist                                                                                                                |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Notification ... | Will pay promptly                              | Usual statement                                                                                                  | Amount due, due date, terms                                                                                         |
| Reminder .....   | Will pay; overlooked                           | Statement, perhaps with rubber stamp, penned note, or sticker; or form letter or brief reference in other letter | Same as above, perhaps with indication that this is not first notice                                                |
| Inquiry .....    | Something unusual; needs special consideration | One letter                                                                                                       | Asks for payment or explanation and offers consideration and helpfulness                                            |
| Appeal .....     | Needs to be persuaded                          | Letters                                                                                                          | Selected appropriate and increasingly forceful appeals, well developed                                              |
| Urgency .....    | May be scared into paying                      | Letter, sometimes from high executive or special collector                                                       | Grave tone of something getting out of hand; still a chance to come through clean                                   |
| Ultimatum ....   | Must be squeezed                               | Letter                                                                                                           | Pay by set date or we'll report to credit bureau or sue; reviews case to retain good will by showing reasonableness |

Of course, there is no more than one mailing at the notification, inquiry, or ultimatum stage. Their nature makes repetition of them illogical. The number and frequency of mailings in the other stages

vary from firm to firm, and even within firms according to the class of customer and other circumstances, such as the type of business (retail or mercantile) and type of sale (open account, installment). In general, the better the credit risk, the greater the number of mailings and the longer the intervals. Usually, however, there are two to four reminders, two or three appeals, and one urgency letter at 10- to 30-day intervals (which usually become shorter near the end).

The assumption, nature, and gist clearly call for modified Plan-A messages in the first two collection stages (where no persuasion is deemed necessary) and for Plan-C letters in the last three. The inquiry stage is middle ground, where one might well use either. Plan-B letters would be appropriate in collections only if the debtor had asked for an unapproved concession, such as an unearned discount.

**Notification (usually a form telling amount, date due, and terms).** On or about the due date, there is no reason to assume anything except prompt payment if the customer knows how much is due, what for, the due date, and the terms. Most people will pay in response to form notices—the first sifting—which give those facts. A personal letter at this stage would insult most people by implying distrust and concern over the account. Instead of a costly letter, then, the notification is almost always a statement (bill) sent on or about the due date. The forms have the advantages of avoiding insults and saving lots of money on the large mailings by reducing the mailing list for the later, more expensive stages.

**Reminder (usually forms giving basic information and adding a push).** If the notice brings no response, the collector gives the customer the benefit of the doubt, assumes that he intends to pay but forgot, and sends him one or more reminders (the number and frequency depending on the circumstances). The collector knows that most of the remaining delinquents will respond at this stage, and his list will be further reduced. He is therefore as much concerned with avoiding offense as with giving the necessary information (amount, what for, due date, and terms).

Reminders are usually forms, in order to save both money and the customer's face, but they may be of several types.

1. Exact copy of the original notice, or copy plus a rubber stamp such as "Second Notice" or "Please Remit."
2. Copy of the first statement with a penned note, such as "Please remit promptly" or "Thank you." (Very effective in collecting but dangerous to good will, in that the personal attention implies concern and distrust.)
3. Copy of the notice with the addition of a colorful gummed sticker carrying a slogan. Effective examples are "Don't delay further;

this is long overdue," "Your prompt remittance is requested," "NOW is the time to take care of this," "Prompt payment insures good credit," "Prompt payments are appreciated," "Don't delay—pay today," "Remember you agreed to pay in thirty days," and "Have you overlooked this?"

Less effective wordings, with the apparent reasons for ineffectiveness in parentheses, are:

We trusted you in good faith; we hope we were not mistaken  
(undesirable implications and tone, stressing *We*)

We are counting on you; don't fail us (selfish view)

If there is any reason for nonpayment, write us frankly (suggests finding something wrong; lacks success-consciousness)

If this checks up clear, clear it up with a check (same criticism as preceding; the word play is questionable)

#### 4. Brief gadget letter (form).

[Picture of Reddy Kilowatt, beside which is]

I'm wondering why—

My note to you last week didn't bring payment of my wages.

Did you by chance forget to send it in? If you have sent my pay within the last day or two, thanks a lot.

Your faithful servant  
REDDY KILOWATT

Do\$ thi\$ little note from u\$ remind you of anything?

I\$n't there \$omething that you have meant to attend to—\$omething that ha\$ nearly e\$capcd your attention?

If you will take ju\$t a moment right now—while the inclo\$ed po\$tage-free envelope i\$ before you—we'll \$urely appreciate it.

Amt.      \$9.08

\$incerely your\$,  
Robert W. Widdicombe

We enclose a small piece of string, just long enough to tie around your finger to remind you that you should send your check today for \$48.50 in payment of . . . .

The little alarm clock pictured in this letterhead, like any alarm clock, reminds you that it's time to do something you planned to do. This one is a friendly reminder that you intended to send your check today for \$28.65. . . .

#### 5. Incidental reminder (italicized in the example) in a personalized letter mainly about something else.

With fall just around the corner and school starting within a month, no doubt you have been planning to order some more fast-selling Queen candies to have plenty on your shelves before the fall rush begins.

By this time you have surely realized the advantage of handling Queen products in your new store. You will want to take advantage of our special back-to-school offer, too. It includes many delicious assorted candies popular with children.

*When you mail your payment of \$126 due July 30, covering our last shipment under our invoice No. 134, dated June 30, won't you also include your next order, so we can assure you an early delivery of factory-fresh candies? Notice the variety in our complete line, as shown in the latest catalogue, a copy of which I'm enclosing for your convenience in making your selections.*

More of the helpful window and counter displays like those sent with your first shipment are available on request. If there is any other way we can help you to sell Queen candies, let us know. We are always glad to be of service.

If we let **xxxxxx** represent collection talk and **\_\_\_\_\_** represent resale or sales-promotion talk, the reminder letter may look like either of the following (usually the first, as in the preceding letter):

| THIS           | or | THIS           |
|----------------|----|----------------|
| _____          |    | xxxxxxxxxxxxxx |
| xxxxxxxxxxxxxx |    | _____          |
| _____          |    | _____          |
| _____          |    | _____          |

Some collection men prefer the second version. They feel that most people behind in their accounts expect a collection letter and spot it as such. Better then, they reason, to send it under no such masquerades as the first. In the following letters, after the direct request for payment the sales material reassures the customer that the firm feels no concern over the status of the account. The first one is a form letter.

Will you please take a moment to fill out your check for \$69.50, the amount due for your August purchases?

And then bring it by the shop so that we can show you all the latest fashions assembled from the choice showings in New York, Dallas, and Los Angeles.

Whether you need a basic outfit or only accessories to complete one, we'll look forward to serving you.

Now that the end-of-the-year rush has let up, won't you please give your personal attention for a few minutes, Mr. Bowers, to your \$95 account for Columbia supplies sent you on December 3?

*Personal attention* is used advisedly here, for you are concerned—more so than are any of your assistants—with the maintenance of your valuable credit reputation among stationery-supply houses. You will want to continue this good record, of course, by taking care of your first purchase from us, sent to you with our invoice BB103. Please sit down now and send us your check for \$95 covering these supplies.

The \$42 worth of supplies, ordered on January 26 and shipped with our invoice CB345, brought your account total to \$137. Doubtless these Valentine and Washington's Birthday sets enlivened your early February sales. With Easter almost here, the new color books and cut-outs shown in the enclosed folder will soon be in demand. May we send you what you need?

Up through the reminder stage in the collection procedure, the assumption is that little or no persuasion is necessary, but just a notice or reminder. Usually the mailings should be inexpensive forms instead of personalized messages. Thus the firm saves money on the large-volume mailings in the first two stages. Most customers pay in those stages, and their names are removed from the list requiring further, more expensive collection efforts. But perhaps more important than the money saved, forms avoid the sting that personalized, full-length collection messages would carry. You may have noticed that even the incidental reminder in the Queen letter was subordinated in dependent-clause structure to avoid too much sting.

6. Individual-sounding letter solely about collection. For greater force in the last reminder, or to poor risks, or about large amounts, the collector may decide to write a letter that talks collection all the way and seems to be individualized. Since most of his delinquents have so much in common, he may still make it a relatively inexpensive fill-in form if he watches the tone and content carefully, typing each copy (perhaps made of form paragraphs) or matching fill-ins neatly.

The following letter for a mercantile concern, for example, is easily adaptable to a large number of customers. With only one fill-in (for the underscored part, conveniently placed at the end of a paragraph) besides the inside address and salutation, it will serve for a large mailing list. It has a touch of pride appeal along with the reminder to reduce the sting of the apparently individualized message.

As a successful businessman, you know what a good credit reputation means.

You have one.

That's why we immediately extended you 30-day credit on your recent order and why we want to be certain that you are completely satisfied with the goods.

We know that the reports of your good credit reputation were correct. And we likewise know that you'll send us payment as soon as this letter recalls the fact that you owe \$85 due November 15 for. . . .

Beyond the reminder stage, however, *obvious* form letters can hardly be expected to do the jobs to be done (though they are sometimes used). In the inquiry stage and beyond, the very nature of the collector's working assumptions seems to call for individualized messages.

For the latest stages of the collection procedure, the collection man fortunately has ample information on the credit application form and in the credit records to do a good job of adaptation in an individually dictated letter. And his earlier mailings have so reduced the list of delinquents that he can afford to give some personal attention to each letter late in the collection procedure.

**Inquiry (giving the debtor a chance to pay or explain; offering help).** When the collector has sent enough reminders to convince himself that oversight is not the cause of delay, he has to start working on another assumption. With a new customer or a poor risk, he may assume that persuasion or force is necessary and skip a stage or two in the usual procedure. With an old customer who has paid regularly, however, he will reason that unusual circumstances must be the cause of delay. He still has confidence in the customer, based on past favorable experience. Certainly he still wants to retain good will. And he is always willing to be considerate of a person temporarily in a financial tight spot.

His plan, then, is to write *one* letter in a spirit of friendly understanding and helpfulness, asking for the money *or* an explanation. Because he prefers the money, he stresses it instead of the explanation of what's wrong or how he can help. But he is careful not to offend this formerly good customer apparently in a temporary jam. And he will not suggest that something is wrong with the goods or the billing (for reasons explained later). His only persuasion is in his frankness, his offer of help, and his considerate attitude. Most people react favorably to requests presented in such a spirit. The letters below illustrate the technique for the inquiry stage:

Because distance makes it impossible for me to come to you for a friendly chat, I ask you to accept this letter as the next best thing.

You now owe us \$250, due since May 31, for the shipment of assorted electric fans listed on Invoice X-221. Formerly you always paid our invoices promptly. We conclude that there is some special reason for the delay this time. As your business friends, can we do anything to help you over the rough spot?

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Of course, we want our money, but we also want to keep your friendship. What is wrong? What can we do to help?

Will you please send your payment today or let me have a full and frank explanation? Perhaps between us we can work out a plan so that you can bring your account up to date without crowding yourself too much and we can continue to supply your immediate needs. If you will use the handy return envelope I'm enclosing, your reply will come direct to my desk unopened.

~~~~~  
Even though we do not send you a series of strong collection letters about the account you owe us, we do expect you to pay it as soon as you can.

In view of the very satisfactory way you have paid your bills for the five years we have been supplying you, I feel sure that something unexpected has happened to you. Can we help you over the hump?

May we ask that you do one of the following three things:

1. If you possibly can, send us a check today for the full amount of \$237.60 for the. . . .
2. Send us a partial payment today and propose a schedule which you can follow to cover the rest.
3. If you honestly feel that you can't spare enough to make a significant partial payment, please explain what the trouble is, what I can do to help, and your proposed schedule for taking care of the account.

I shall have to be able to report some response soon or my boss is going to think I'm not doing my job. May I ask your help in doing 1, 2, or 3?

~~~~~  
I wish I could sit down and talk with you for a few minutes about the circumstances that leave January and February charges to you on the books.

But because of distance I can only study our past experience with you, and various kinds of credit information. Everything I have points to your having a quite satisfactory credit standing. Your past record of prompt payment therefore leaves me unconcerned about ultimate collection, but it also leaves me wondering what's wrong now.

Please either make immediate payment of the \$157.47 balance due or drop me a note today telling just how you intend to handle the account. You'll find me co-operative in accepting any reasonable proposal for your taking care of it—or better, the \$157.47.

You may have noticed that those letters avoid two common collection-letter errors that have their first chance to come up in the inquiry stage.

The first is that, in writing inquiry-stage letters, most collectors

and even most writers about collections seem to favor asking questions about the customer's possible dissatisfaction with the goods or charges or both. The apparent purpose of the questions is to secure some kind of answer. Any answer is supposedly better than silence, for two of the same reasons that partial payments are often encouraged—they keep the debtor thinking about his obligation, and they renew his acceptance of it.

But aren't such questions psychologically unsound, if not ethically undesirable? If the debtor had found anything wrong with the goods or the billing, would he not himself have suggested an adjustment, especially after being hounded by the collector's former mailings? If he hasn't reported anything wrong, is it not poor policy to suggest that he should? Isn't the collector practically suggesting that if the debtor will claim that something is wrong, he can gracefully postpone payment and perhaps even get an unjustified adjustment? Isn't the collector offering a gun and inviting the debtor to take a few shots? Certainly, he is working in the opposite direction from both resale talk and success consciousness.

The second common error that has its first chance to show up in the inquiry-stage letter is backtracking—that is, going back to the assumption of an earlier stage in the collection procedure. Apparently in an effort to save the delinquent's face, a timid collector sometimes grabs back at "oversight" (the assumption of the reminder stage) after he has started a letter in the inquiry stage. He is only kidding himself and forfeiting the respect of his reader. If he believes that oversight is the reason for the delay, he should not advance to the inquiry stage.

The same kind of nerveless collector sometimes shows the same tendencies in two other places in the collection procedure. After his inquiry-stage offer of special consideration has been ignored, he sometimes incongruously repeats it in letters of the next stage. The debtor then sees the poor fellow quaking in his boots and takes advantage of him, much as a dog, a horse, or a bull will take advantage of a person who obviously fears him.

Not many businessmen—even those who backtrack in other ways—will send an ultimatum and then back down on it. The ultimatum is such a definite action that to do so would be the worst kind of backtracking. Still a few lily-livered collectors do. They merely spoil customers and lose their respect, just as many mothers do with their children by issuing ultimatums and not carrying them out.

The summing-up on all three kinds of backtracking is simply this: Don't do it. Hold on to one working assumption until it seems unsound. Then throw it overboard, grab the next one, and don't be diving into the water to retrieve the discard. If you've threatened to sue or report the delinquent unless you get your money by a certain

day and the money doesn't come, sue or report. Conversely, don't talk about suing or reporting until you are seriously considering it.

**Appeals** (*basically reader benefits, made increasingly forceful*). If the delinquent does not respond to a friendly inquiry, apparently he is taking the wrong attitude toward his indebtedness. The collector again shifts his working assumption accordingly. His new assumption is that the debtor must be persuaded to pay. He will not backtrack from that.

**Basic considerations.** At the appeal stage the collection letter writer does his main work. In doing it, he keeps in mind four important points.

1. For persuasiveness, write individualized messages. The earlier brief notices, reminders, and inquiries will have collected most of the accounts (the easy ones) as inexpensively as possible in terms of time and good will. The remaining few will be harder to collect. Usually they will require individualized (or at least individual-sounding) letters rather than forms, because they have to be persuasive. By using the information in the credit records, the collector can write individualized messages that are specific and therefore persuasive to a degree impossible in a form that has to be general because it has to fit many people.

2. Develop only one or two points. Scattering shots like a shotgun over several undeveloped appeals weakens the message too much to reach the hard-to-collect-from delinquents. Something like a rifle bullet, with all the powder behind one fully developed central theme, will be more forceful. That usually means longer letters because they must be specific and say enough to make the point emphatic; but they pay off in results.

3. Retain good will as far as possible. Because they are individualized, pointed, full-length collection messages, appeal-stage letters will necessarily carry some sting. Like doctors and patients, however, collectors and debtors have to accept the fact that the needle carrying strong medicine for advanced stages of a disease often has a sting. Still the wise collector, like the humane doctor, will minimize the sting as much as possible without weakening the medicine. He knows that many desirable customers sometimes fall behind in payments; so he is still interested in retaining good will. He knows that nasty-toned, strong-arm methods lose customers and collect no more money than more pleasant methods. As B. C. Gilbert says ("The Modern Trend in Collections," *Credit Currents*, September, 1954, p. 9),

Never, in the handling of a delinquent account, is harshness justified . . . you can be firm without being harsh. The average man is a pretty good guy at heart. All you need to do is skillfully stimulate the customer's desire to pay you and you'll both be happy.

The job is therefore to write one or more letters (the number, frequency, and forcefulness depending on the class of credit risk) to persuade the debtor to pay without losing him as a customer.

4. Select a reader-benefit appeal. Successful collection, like successful selling or any other kind of persuasion, involves showing the debtor that he will get something he wants or avoid something he doesn't want—in other words, you-attitude.

Appeals to sympathy (variously called the "poor-me" appeal or the appeal to co-operation) do not meet the requirement. They are fundamentally selfish, lacking in the you-attitude. People don't usually pay to help a creditor but to help themselves get something they want or avoid something they don't. The following letter, for example, is not likely to collect from the purchaser of a brown weasel coat bought during a January fur sale:

You have often heard of a business house needing money to finance its operations, haven't you? How is a concern going to carry on if there is no source of income to meet its constantly growing bills?

That, Mrs. Rose, is our problem today; hence we are asking you again to send us a remittance to cover the balance of your past-due account. Won't you please accommodate us by balancing your account tomorrow?

Though a cleverly and humorously overdrawn picture of the writer's family in need might bring the money, it is more likely to bring a wisecrack answer. For instance, one man built his letter around a picture of his wife and eleven children, with the note below: "This is why I MUST have my money." The answer was the picture of a beautiful blonde with the note "This is why I CAN'T pay."

Psychological analysis shows that when a sympathy appeal does work, usually it does so because the reader feels a twinge of conscience about putting a good fellow like the writer into a predicament. That twinge is something the reader wants to avoid. So we are back where we started: Show the debtor that by paying he will get something he wants or avoid something he doesn't.

Basically people want

- a) To have self-respect and the approval of others (they have to live with both themselves and others) and
- b) To avoid loss of what they have and add to those things (money, property, and the credit privilege, for example).

Appeals to all except the desire for the approval of others are usable in collections. A creditor would not dare (for fear of libel suit) tell the shortcomings of debtors to anybody except other creditors or prospective creditors with an interest to protect. And if he told them,

their unfavorable actions would affect the debtor more in terms of *b* than in terms of social disapproval. So a collector can be persuasive by showing debtors how they benefit in self-respect or in economic self-interest.

The true collector is therefore really a salesman. Like a salesman, he makes a careful analysis of the customer, selects the appeal most likely to succeed with the particular individual in the specific situation, and sells him on the idea of paying by showing him the benefit he gets. The resale, pride, and fair-play appeals show the reader how to retain a clear conscience and keep up his self-respect.

*The resale appeal.* Touches of resale belong in every collection letter, to keep the debtor satisfied and to show him what he got for his promise to pay; but resale can also be used as the theme of a whole appeal letter. Essentially it goes back and almost repeats the points a good salesman would make in selling the product. By the time the collector-salesman is through reselling, the debtor will see that he got good value. Whether you call it his integrity, his respect for his word when he made the contract, his sense of fair play, or his pride, he will be prompted to pay by his basic desire to act so that he will have a clear conscience and be able to live with himself.

Though any appeal may be made ineffective or good-will-killing by inept phrasing, the danger is not great in the resale appeal. Really effective use of it, however, requires skillful salesmanship. The collector must be imaginative enough to paint a vivid, interesting picture of the product in use; and he must be willing to make it complete, detailed, and long enough to be persuasive. The following letters illustrate the type:

Now that Asbex and Asbar have had time to prove their profit-making ability to you, can you say that we were right? We said that they would be a good selling team for you.

When you followed up your original Asbex order of April 15 with the April 27 order for ten gallons each of Asbex and Asbar, you showed that you thought the fire-retarding twins would move quickly together. With your good reputation for prompt payment as our guide, we were glad to have such a desirable outlet as your store for this pair of fast sellers. Although your payment of \$39 for the first shipment, Invoice BT-41198, is now ten days overdue, you can keep your record intact by sending us a check in the next mail. If you make the check for \$156, you can also pay for the second shipment, Invoice BT-41390, on its net date.

From all reports on the way business is in Ardmore, you'll be sending us repeat orders before long. We'll be looking forward to serving you, now that you have learned that Asbex and Asbar fill a recurring need of your customers. With readers of *Life*, *Good Housekeeping*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and more and more

satisfied users spreading the good news, you can expect ever-increasing turnover with the twins in your stock.

The following letter from a building-and-loan collector who had made the loan originally and knew the family quite well is even more personal in its resale appeal. The reference to passing pleasures in the second paragraph is a subtle way of letting Mr. Barnes know, without preaching to him, that the collector knows where the money went—into expensive parties designed to keep up with the Joneses.

When you and Mrs. Barnes moved into your new home two years ago, I was very proud that I had something to do with it, for if there is anything that contributes to the pleasure of life it is a good place to live—and especially if that place belongs to the occupant. I feel that there is much more than mere sentiment behind those words "There's no place like home."

Indeed, there is so much of comfort, security, and pride in home ownership that anyone should forego passing pleasures that eat up his income, take the savings, and invest in a home—just as you decided to do.

The importance to you of keeping up your payments on your loan can not be overstressed. Perhaps by now you are used to your home and you take it as a matter of course. But take a walk around the lawn. Note the landscaping; note the beautiful architectural lines of the building. Then go inside and think for a minute how comfortable you, Mary, Jim, and Jane are there. Think where you would be without it. And suppose you were going to build today. Instead of the \$18,000 you paid, you would now have to pay about \$20,000 because of increased prices in general. Really, you cannot afford to stop enjoying those comforts.

So will you please come in and take care of your March, April, and May payments as soon as possible?

*Pride appeal.* Often resale talk is interwoven with a subtle appeal to pride; or the appeal to pride may be more or less independent of resale on the goods. In either case the writer uses all his knowledge of practical psychology to know when to encourage pride by sincere compliments, when to needle it, and when to challenge it. If he bumbles, he may get a surprising answer, as did the collector who asked what the neighbors would think if he came into town and repossessed the debtor's new car. The answer was that the neighbors all agreed it would be a low-down, dirty trick. The collector had erred in challenging when he should have been encouraging pride.

One collector was successful by quoting from a highly favorable credit report on the debtor, asking if he recognized the description, and encouraging him to retain the reputation like that by taking the required prompt action. Others have used the technique of giving

percentages of customers who pay at different stages in the collection procedure and saying that, of course, the debtor does not want to be in the minority groups at the end of the list. The essence of success with the pride appeal is to encourage the debtor toward actions he can be proud of and to avoid the use of accusations and implications of shame as far as possible. The following examples show the methods. Note that the first (an early letter) ends with sales promotion, and the last (to a university student) incorporates a reference that is almost a left hook.

Your choice of the navy blue suit, the light tan suit with matching shoes, purse, and gloves, for a total of \$182.95, shows the care and pride with which you select your clothes.

We feel sure that you want to show that same pride in maintaining your preferred credit rating. Drop your check for \$182.95 in the mail today, and your account, due November 10, will be paid in full.

The next time you are in town, come by and look over our completely new line of Mary Margaret furs. Whether you want to make additions to your wardrobe or merely to see the latest fashions, your visit will be welcomed.

~~~~~  
When you applied for credit privileges with us, we of course checked your rating.

"Good" and "Fair" some firms reported, and (according to three) "Excellent." You may well be proud of such a rating.

Let us help you keep your pride in your rating by writing "Paid" after the 30-day overdue balance of \$33.88 that now shows on our books for. . . .

~~~~~  
Twenty-seven other Lansing residents bought Monora television sets the same week you got yours.

That was just a little over three months ago. Yet twenty-three of them have already been in to take care of their payments as agreed. We made a note of their prompt payments on their records. And they walked out of the store pleased with themselves, their sets, and us.

When you stop to think about it, the good credit rating you establish by promptly paying as agreed is more than a matter of personal pride. It adds to the value and desirability of your account with any store in Lansing. It's a personal recommendation, too, for employers often check the credit record of an applicant for a job.

Take the two minutes now to send us your check. Or bring your payment by the store tomorrow.

*Fair-play appeal.* By using slightly different wording, you can turn the basic appeal to self-respect into an appeal to fair play. The word-

ing may recall the debtor's sense of respect for a contract, his feeling of duty to do what he has promised, or his conscience that makes him do the right thing. It develops the feeling that the debtor should carry out his part of the bargain, since the creditor has been fair in carrying out his. Integrity or honesty may be as good a name for the appeal. Some people call it a request for co-operation. Whatever the name, a well-developed, positive presentation (without accusations) showing the reader that he should pay to be fair is an effective appeal. It goes back to the fundamental idea that the debtor promised to pay by a certain time for certain goods or services. Since the benefits have been delivered, the fair thing is that he should pay for them. Almost everybody wants to feel that he is fair in his dealings with others. Here are two examples of the appeal:

On August 20 we filled your order for a . . . on credit because of our faith in you to pay according to terms. It has no doubt given you the service you expected by . . .

We were glad to extend open account terms to you; and although this has run far beyond the usual 30 days, isn't it true that we've been fairly decent about waiting this long for our money?

I cannot believe that you want us to suffer a loss because of our good faith in filling your order without cash in advance.

So I'm enclosing an addressed envelope that needs no postage, and I'm appealing to you to use it—this moment—to send the \$27.60 due us and to make our contract a two-sided one, the way it is supposed to be.



How would you feel next payday if you received no paycheck? I'm sure you would feel that you had been giving good service and that your employer should pay for it.

When we ask you for the \$44.95 for the coat you bought November 18, we are only asking for what is due us.

At the time we placed your name on our credit list, I thought we made clear that accounts are due the tenth of the month following purchase. Perhaps more important, I thought you accepted the terms.

In fairness to us and to yourself, won't you please come in today and settle this account according to our agreement?

*Appeals to economic self-interest.* Even the man who has no sense of obligation to pay for value received (as developed in the resale appeal), or of pride, or of fair play in treating other decent people fairly will likely pay if it is clearly to his own economic self-interest to do so. You may therefore write forceful collection appeals to a debtor's desire to add to what he has by using his valuable credit privilege or to his desire to avoid loss of that valuable asset. The sec-

ond is frequently called the appeal to fear; but the first is more positive, less likely to hurt good will, and therefore more desirable (especially early in the appeal stage).

Slight shifts of emphasis in the wording, as in the illustrations below, may stress the convenience of credit in future buying or the economics of credit:

The increasing size of your three orders for Mada irons and lamps since June 15 indicates that your business must be good.

With your business growing as indicated, you'll be needing a greater variety of stock. That's just good merchandising. It's also good merchandising to pay for your stock within the sixty-day period allowed.

Please send your check for \$260, which is now almost four weeks past due. New Mada stocks are coming in now, and you'll want to be in a position to offer your customers the latest in electrical supplies.



As a successful business manager, you know the value of maintaining a well-stocked inventory. You would probably like now to begin your orders for galoshes, rubber boots, stadium boots, and other long-wearing, quick-selling Red Ball products in preparation for the season just ahead when they will be most in demand.

Perhaps your account for 6 pairs of galoshes, 12 pairs of rubber boots, and 6 pairs of tennis shoes, for a total of \$93.50, has kept you from ordering those items you need. Today, while the matter is fresh on your mind, mail your check for \$93.50 along with an order for the Red Ball products you'll need soon to supply your customers' requests.

By mailing your order today, you can be sure the shipment will reach you by the middle of the month.



The reassurance of a good coat of clear, fire-resistant Asbex on your house and barn is like the reassurance of a prompt-pay credit rating: each is just an extra measure.

You hope you won't have occasion to use it, but it's mighty comforting to know it's there in case you need it.

As a businessman with many years of experience, you realize how much more valuable a good account is when it is stamped "prompt pay." With such a label, other ranchers around Ardmore have found their credit a real help—especially when the cattle market was slow and little money was coming in.

Because such a reputation is built up only by paying on time every time, you'll want to take care of the \$59 for the Asbex you bought over two months ago. When you bring the check around to the

store, remind me to show you a new type safety wire fence. It should be just the thing for that new colt pen you were telling us about the last time you were in.

~~~~~  
Why is a prompt-pay rating like money in the bank?

Both are able to command goods and services immediately when you want them.

On the basis of your ability to pay and your reputation for meeting payments promptly, we extended credit immediately when you asked for it. Now we ask that you send your check for \$98.76 to cover your August shipment of jewelry, sold to you on credit just as if you had drawn on your bank account for it.

Then look through the enclosed booklet. Notice the color pictures of things you'd like to have in stock for Toledo's Christmas shoppers. The Heavy-Hollow Silver Plate described on page 3 is a line for moderate budgets. It's durable as well as handsome, since it's triple-plated silver on copper.

Should you care to order on our regular terms, enclose a check covering your balance of \$98.76 and order the new stock; use your credit as if it were another check drawn on money in the bank.

~~~~~  
Customers are quick to buy Presto-Lite flashlights at \$3.45, aren't they?

That price gives you a substantial 50% markup on each one you sell and helps you meet competition for sales of reliable, durable flashlights.

One of the reasons you enjoy this favorable pricing is that we extend credit only to those outlets with good credit ratings and thus keep down collection costs. When our credit customers pay within the agreed-on 30 days, we can take all cash discounts available from our suppliers and pass these savings on to our customers and their customers in the form of lower prices. If they take 90 days, however, the \$2 you pay us for a Presto-Lite would probably increase to \$2.15 or \$2.20 and would wind up costing your customers around \$3.75. That affects both of us, doesn't it?

So that all of us may profit from the real economies of prompt payments, please write out your check for \$51 covering the 24 Presto-Lite flashlights you received almost 50 days ago and mail it to us in the enclosed envelope.

Though the following letter speaks of fair play, it is not an appeal to fair play as explained before but to the debtor's economic self-interest in enjoying the benefits of the credit privilege:

Are you playing fair—

—playing fair with yourself, I mean?

You want to continue to get merchandise promptly by merely mailing an order to your supplier. Rightfully you can expect the best of service along with good-quality products when you arrange a businesslike transaction. You will agree that you would not be fair to yourself if your actions caused you to lose this privilege.

The Reliable Paint and Varnish Company has continued to honor this privilege because in the past you have always settled your account satisfactorily. At present, however, you owe us \$125, now three months overdue, on Invoice 362773 covering a shipment of thirty-five gallons of white Reliable House Paint.

To treat yourself fairly and to preserve your good, businesslike reputation, you will want to get your account balanced promptly. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your check today and put your account in good condition again.

**Urgency.** When the regular collector is getting nowhere with appeals like those in the preceding letters, he may continue with stronger letters or he may turn the job over to a higher executive for the final few mailings. Sometimes he writes the letters himself and sends them out over the signature of the treasurer, the president, the company lawyer, the credit bureau, or a collection agency.

The psychology is to give the reader the feeling that things are getting pretty serious when the moguls have to take over. Though urgency-stage letters are not actually the end of the collection procedure, they are designed to seem close. They therefore answer the question of the lady in the *New Yorker* cartoon who flashed an early-stage collection letter at the collection desk and asked how many more she would receive before she had to pay.

Actually, the letter sent over the signature of the higher executive is usually a forceful development of one of the appeals already discussed. It may go a bit further on the economic interests of the debtor and talk about the cost of facing suit (since the debtor would have to pay the bill and court costs), but usually not. Even now the firm is still interested in good will. It knows that there is still a chance of retaining the customer. If he is lost as a credit customer, it desires to have him as a cash customer and to have him speak of the firm as favorably as possible. So the executive more frequently plays the role of the good fellow who gives a man a last chance. But he still does not turn the screws all the way by setting an end date. The following letter was signed by the company treasurer:

When you began your business, a good reputation in Ardmore made it possible for you to get loans, and your hard work and prompt payments—good reputation again—got you credit on your purchases.

This good reputation is more important to you now than ever before, for with the unsettled world conditions causing wide fluctuations in the securities market, credit agencies are becoming more and more strict in their policies—and businessmen are learning to be more careful in abiding by their requirements.

We have not received your check for the \$156 for your invoices 69507, covering our shipment of 10 gallons of Asbex on April 10, and 76305, covering the shipment on April 20 of 10 gallons of Asbex and 20 gallons of Asbar. Some arrangement for this settlement is necessary right away. We are willing to accept your 90-day note at 5% for this amount so that you can protect your credit rating without lowering your cash balance.

We would of course prefer to have your check; but, for the benefit of your business, your customers, and your creditors, won't you please settle your account with us today?

**Ultimatum.** If there is no response to the serious mood, the strong appeal, and the big-heartedness of the executive's offer of still another chance to save the debtor's credit rating, the collector will give the screw its last turn. He now assumes that he will have to squeeze the money out of the debtor. He has decided that as long as he gives this debtor any slack, he will move around in it. The collector therefore notifies the debtor that on a definite date, usually 5-10 days later, he will turn the account over to a collection agency or to a lawyer—unless he receives payment before that time.

Though the language of the ultimatum is firm, it should not be harsh. The action itself, however, is inclined to anger the delinquent customer. To minimize his resentment, the collector commonly reviews the whole case at this point to show that he cannot well do otherwise, that he has been fair and considerate all along (but he does not become self-righteous about it), that he dislikes to take the necessary action, but that it is justified. Carefully worded, this letter may collect and still retain good will because of the fair-play appeal in the whole review. Usually it will at least collect, as these two letters did:

When we sent you your first credit shipment of \$95 worth of Christmas supplies under Invoice CA-872 on December 4, we took the step that all stationery wholesalers take when granting similar credit requests: we verified your good credit reputation with the National Stationery Manufacturers' Guild, of which we are a member.

The Guild's certification meant that you invariably pay your bills. When we received a second order on January 26, we were happy to serve you again by shipping \$42 worth of Valentine cut-outs and art supplies, under Invoice CB-345. Since then we have tried to be both reasonable and considerate in inducing you to pay by our

usual collection procedures. Now we shall be compelled by the terms of our membership agreement to submit your name to the Guild as "nonpay" unless we receive your check for \$137 by April 15.

You are no doubt aware of the effects of being labeled by the Guild as nonpay. Credit requests to new supply houses will be refused; old sources will be reluctant to continue supplying you on a credit basis. We want to help you maintain your preferred status so that you can continue to stock your shelves through easy credit mail orders.

With the sincerity of a friend, I urge you to weigh carefully the effects of a bad report and the advantages of a favorable one on your hard-earned and well-thought-of credit rating. I urge you to avoid the necessity of our submitting an unfavorable report. And beyond that, of course, would be a suit in which you would not only pay the bill but the court costs.

All the advantages of an unmarred credit standing among suppliers are yours now. Mail us your check for \$137 by the 15th and retain those advantages.

~~~~~  
Let's talk once more about your 95-day overdue account amounting to \$68 for the butcher supplies you bought July 15.

That buying was done a long time ago, Mr. Forrest, and the sale was made on the basis that you would pay within 30 days. By your acceptance of the goods, you made a contract to pay according to the terms.

Although this contract is legal and binding, we usually use the Wholesale Credit Men's Association, rather than the courts, as our final collection agency. You are probably familiar with this Association and know what a stamp of "bad pay" on its record can do to you. Every supply house is a member. It's almost impossible for any firm to get credit on supplies with a bad record in the Association files; and it's difficult for a retailer to operate without credit.

Think it over and see if it's not worth \$68 plus the small amount of time necessary to write out a check. Your account should have been reported as an overdue one before now, but I like to give a man a warning and a last chance.

Let us hear from you with a check enclosed for \$68, not later than the 28th.

If an ultimatum like the two above does not bring the money by the date set, the only remaining letter to write is a courtesy letter, not a collection letter, telling the customer of the action that has been taken. Then the case is out of the hands of the writer of collection letters and in the hands of a lawyer. In any event, the collection series ends with the ultimatum.

## Collecting Unearned Discounts

A special problem which does not fit into the regular collection procedure is that of collecting unearned discounts (that is, discounts taken when sending payment of a bill after the end of the discount period). The difficulty is increased by the fact that the amount is usually small—always small in comparison with the volume of business the collector is risking in trying to collect. Moreover, some of the larger purchasers know their importance to the collector's firm and try to bulldoze him because of it. They know he would think twice before losing their \$200 orders to collect an improper \$4 discount.

Fortunately, the collector usually has some advantages on his side, too:

1. When the occasion arises, he is almost certainly dealing with experienced businessmen who understand business practices and will understand a businessman's reasoned analysis.
2. The sizable purchaser has almost certainly investigated various sources of supply and has settled on the collector's. He might be as reluctant to change suppliers as the collector would be to lose him as a customer.
3. If the collector cannot get his money in early to use for financing the business, there is no justification for allowing discounts. He will need that money to pay interest on money borrowed for financing while slow collections are coming in. As a businessman, the debtor will understand that the ultimate end to his action of not paying on time will be a revised system in which he has no possibility of discount at all.
4. The fair-play appeal can be broadened to include playing fair with all the collector's other customers. That is, he cannot well allow one to take the unearned discount while requiring others to pay according to terms.

Armed thus, the collector is ready for the taker of unearned discounts. First, he can certainly start by assuming that the deduction was just a little misunderstanding of the terms. If there is any doubt about whether the terms were made clear, he may assume responsibility, make the terms clear, and overlook the improper deduction **THE FIRST TIME**.

When there is no doubt, the collector can certainly assume (reasonably enough) that the unjustified deduction is a result of a failure to check the dates—an unintentional chiseling—and that the additional money will be forthcoming after a little reminder. One writer used an analogy for the reminder by telling the story of the boy who presented nine apples as his mother's offering for the harvest festival. When the vicar said he would call to thank the mother, the boy asked him please to thank her for ten apples.

If the collector finds that neither misunderstanding of the terms

nor failure to check dates is the reason for the improper deduction of unearned discount, he has a real letter-writing job. Though well armed—with justice, legal advantages, and some psychology on their side—some collectors fear to go ahead. The almost inevitable result is chaos in the collection department, or at least in the discount system. Word gets around.

The bold do better. Their appeals are Item 3 above (the economic justification of discounting practices) and Item 4 (the broadened fair-play appeal). Often a good letter combines both, as in some of the following illustrations:

From your letter of May 25 we can well understand why you feel entitled to the 2% discount from our Invoice X-10 of April 30. If some of our creditors allowed us discounts after the end of the discount period, we too might expect others to do the same.

The discount you get from us when you pay within a definite, specified period is simply our passing on to you the saving our creditors allow us for using the money we collect promptly and paying our bills within ten days after making purchases. It's certainly true that your discount of \$4.57 is small; but large or small, we would have allowed it if we had had your payment in time to use in making a similar saving in paying our own bills. If our creditors gave us a longer time, we'd gladly give you a longer time.

Since they don't, I believe you see that the only solutions besides following the terms are stopping all discounts, taking the loss on all our sales, or being unfair to our many other customers by making exceptions and showing favoritism. I don't think you want us to do any of those things, do you, Mr. Griggs?

When you mail us your check for the full invoice amount of \$228.57, we know that you will do so with the spirit of good business practice and fairness.

Thank you again for your order. You will find that our merchandise and attractive prices will always assure you of a more-than-average profit.



The fact that we are returning your check for \$2,450 does not mean that we don't appreciate your business. Rather, we want you to use your money for ten more days and, from your experience, to answer a question on which we want your opinion.

Before I ask the question, however, I want to stress the fact that we consider your company an ideal outlet for our products in your area. Apparently you also consider our products a good line to sell.

But evidently we are not in such complete agreement on the matter of cash discount as established in our terms of 2/10, n/30. The question is: Is your money worth 36% a year to you? Under our terms we pay you 2% for the use of your money for twenty days

(the time between the discount date and the net-due date) or 36% a year. We do this because it is a trade practice, but there is no justification for it unless we have the money during those twenty days. We have no right, of course, to use your money even part of that time without paying for the use of it; so we are returning your check and asking that you pay the net of \$2,500 on the due date, ten days hence.

We believe you will welcome this frank presentation so that you can give discounts your fair-minded consideration. May we have your decision?

That letter did both of its jobs of collecting the money and retaining the customer. Certainly it was not written by the distrusting merchant who told a new employee that if somebody wanted to pay a bill and somebody else yelled FIRE, to take the money first and then put out the fire.

The problem of unearned discount becomes particularly difficult after you have allowed one exception, explained the terms carefully, refused to allow a second exception, and received a reply including statements like these:

. . . I thought that an organization such as yours would be above such hair-splitting tactics . . . and I resent your hiding behind a mere technicality to collect an additional \$3.69 . . . oversight.  
. . . If you wish . . . a new check will be mailed, but . . . it will be your last from us.

Here's how one collection writer handled that hot potato—successfully:

I appreciate your letter of December 5 because it gives me an opportunity to explain our request that you mail us a check for \$184.50 in place of the one for \$180.81.

It was prompted primarily by our sincere desire to be entirely fair to you and all our other customers. For years we have allowed a discount of two percent to all who pay their bills within ten days of the invoice date. Such prompt payment enables us to make a similar saving by paying our own bills promptly. Thus we pass on to you and our other customers the savings their prompt payments allow us to make.

But if our customers wait longer than the ten days to pay us, there is no saving for us to pass on. Of course, an allowance of \$3.69 is a small matter, but if we allowed it in one case we would have to allow similar discounts to all our customers or be unfair to some. The principle involved is a serious one, since any exception would have to become the rule if we are to be fair to all.

I feel sure that you want us to treat all customers alike, just as you do in your own business. Certainly I do not think you would

like it if you found that we were more lenient with somebody else than with you. Our request for the additional \$3.69 is necessary if we are to treat all alike.

Thank you again for writing me and giving me this chance to explain. May we have your check—in fairness to all?

### **Humor in Collections**

Generally, past-due accounts are not laughing matters, either for the debtor or for the collector. But small amounts early in the collection procedure are not deadly serious matters either. In the early stages, where little or no persuasion is presumed to be necessary or even desirable, the main job of the letter is to gain attention and remind the debtor. Under these circumstances a humorous letter may be just the thing. Its sprightliness will supply the attention and memory value needed. The light mood will take the sting out of the letter and make the collector seem like a friendly human being instead of an ogre.

A widely known and highly successful collection letter, the famous "Elmer" letter by Miles Kimball, pictures both kinds of collection man. The writer, a friendly human, warns the debtor against the ogre, Elmer, treasurer of the company, who sometimes gets out of hand and writes letters that destroy a reader's will to live. The whole thing is a detailed and ridiculous account of the kind of ogre Elmer is and the disastrous effects of his letters, plus a brief warning to pay now before Elmer writes.

Shorter humorous letters are more usual. For example, there is the one which merely asks for the name of the best lawyer in the debtor's town, in case the collector has to sue. The New York *Journal of Commerce* reported a few years ago that one collector was simply mailing small, live turtles to slow payers. *Time* has long used two humorous letters for people who don't pay for their subscriptions. One, on the back of the front picture cover of the current issue of *Time*, begins "I'm sorry—sorry I can't send you any more than the cover of this week's *TIME*." It then goes into a brief resale appeal. The other begins with the assertion of how much is due, proceeds to poke fun at the usual collection letter, shows how large numbers of small accounts add up, and ends with the pun that "procrastination is the thief of *TIME*." Still another journal begins a subscription-collection with

"CHECKING, JUST CHECKING,"

said the telephone lineman when the lady jumped out of the bathtub to answer. I'm just checking to find out whether you want to continue to receive. . . .

The rest of the letter is the usual resale appeal with a standard action ending.

Another device is that called the one-sided or half-and-half letter. The writer presents what is essentially an inquiry-stage collection letter as a narrow column on the left half of the page and asks the reader to use the right half to attach his check or explain.

Though such letters (usually inexpensive forms) may be effective in collecting small amounts early in the series, they are too flippant for large amounts or late-stage collections. The exception is that they might be used just before an ultimatum with the hope of jolting the debtor out of his rut. But we must not forget that

1. The credit obligation is a serious responsibility and we can't expect the debtor to take it seriously if we are undignified about it.
2. Written joshing is more likely to offend than oral banter.
3. Gageteering and humor in letters of all kinds is likely to be overrated because we are more likely to hear of the occasional successes than of the numerous failures.

## Legal Dangers in Collections

In preparing collection letters, especially those of the late stages, the collector needs to be familiar with the privileges and limitations imposed upon him by law. Reporting delinquents to credit associations which are set up within the law (for mutual protection of members' interests) and threats of civil suit to collect money are both legal. Threats of physical violence are not permissible in the mails, and threats to accuse the debtor of a criminal offense or other threats of extortion or blackmail are illegal.

The other important aspect of law applicable to collections is libel—that is, the writing of injurious comments about somebody and not taking proper precautions against their being read by a third party. The best way to avoid a libel suit is to avoid making libelous comments. But collectors cannot always do that. Any attempt to collect after the due date may be interpreted as implying dishonesty, unreliability, or slow pay. Any of these may damage the credit or reputation of the debtor and be libelous if read by a third party (even the debtor's secretary), unless the sender has taken reasonable precautions to see that nobody except the debtor reads it. Therefore, all collection efforts after the due date should be sent in sealed envelopes; and, if the sender knows that a secretary or anybody else regularly opens the reader's mail, they should also be marked PERSONAL.

Libel may be both a civil and a criminal offense. That is, the damaged party may sue for damages (civil suit), and the state may impose a fine or jail sentence on the guilty. Truth and good faith (absence of malicious intent) together constitute an adequate defense

against both kinds of libel suits. Good faith is usually adequate against criminal charges, and truth is adequate against civil charges in most states, but not in all. To protect himself from legal difficulties, therefore, the collector should:

1. Be sure his past-due collection efforts are sealed, so that only the debtor will read them.
2. Never make defamatory statements or accusations maliciously.
3. Be sure to get his facts right.

### **Beginnings and Endings**

For most writers the beginnings and endings of letters, including collection letters, are the most troublesome spots. Beginnings are more difficult than endings because the background or point of contact is more varied than the desired action, and therefore the beginning cannot be well standardized.

This much, however, can be said: You have to capture the reader's attention and interest and hold it through the letter. Identification of the account (the amount due, what for, and when due) should be clear in every case, but those facts do not make good beginnings for persuasive letters; the reader has already shown his lack of interest in them. Neither is the beginning job well done by references to former attempts to collect. Such references may sound like whining or may suggest that the debtor can again ignore the request with impunity. Since collections are basically sales letters—selling the debtor on the benefits of paying—the collector will do well to reapply the principle of reader-benefit beginnings.

Just as the salesman drives for an order at the end of his sales talk, so does the good collection writer strive to bring in a check or an explanation that will name a payment date. So the standard action ending—telling what to do, making clear how to do it, making action easy, and providing a stimulus to prompt action—is always proper except in the early stages of the series, where it is too forceful. There resale or sales-promotional talk rather than the request for payment usually ends the letter to imply faith, appeal to pride, perhaps promote sales, and remove the sting. Though the collector always writes with success-consciousness because he expects his letter to bring results, in none except the one serving notice that the account has been placed in the hands of an attorney does he fail to leave the way open for more severe action, as in the following forceful requests:

Please sit down NOW—while your resolution is still strong—and send us your check for the balance of \$225 due on your Christmas purchases. Your name will then remain in the preferred-customer file.

Won't you come by our office Saturday night and close this account in such a way that we can write a completely satisfactory comment about you on our records?

We're enclosing an addressed envelope that we expect to see back in our office—with a check enclosed for \$100—before the 15th.

Wherever feasible the collection writer will find it advisable to make response easy for the debtor. An already addressed and stamped envelope does that and also provides a strong stimulus to prompt action. The DMAA reported that 798 collection letters sent without reply envelopes brought remittances from 42.85 per cent and requests for time extensions from 6.78 per cent for a total of 49.63 per cent answering but that a similar mailing of 798 letters which included reply envelopes brought remittances from 45.12 per cent and requests for extensions from 16.80 per cent for a total of 61.92 per cent responding. Even the casual "Don't bother to write a letter; just slip your check into the enclosed envelope . . ." will show the debtor the friendly attitude you have toward him and will frequently produce the check.

Because collection-letter circumstances vary so much, there are few universal truths about them suitable for a check list such as we have provided for some other kinds of letters. But the appended suggestions on pp. 660–61 will be helpful as a partial check list for collection letters.

## **LETTER CASES FOR PART THREE**

### **Inquiries about Products and People**

1. Assuming that you coach the high-school football team of your town, write Nacona Athletic Goods Company, Nacona, Texas, for information about good all-covered vinyl protective equipment (shoulder pads, rib pads, hip pads, arm pads, knee pads, thigh guards, and shin guards) as advertised under the trade name Nakon in this year's *The Sports Review*. In the past the equipment you have had has absorbed perspiration and therefore slowed the players down because of the added weight. Will the Nakon's shock-absorbing Permitwhite Protecto Vinylaire resist moisture readily? Operating on a limited budget, you want to buy at a discount. What would the price be for 22 complete sets? Will the company make the break-away jerseys to go with the game uniforms?
2. With emphasis more and more on the do-it-yourself type of products, you (Robert M. Greene, Box 694, your state university) decide to see if it's practical to install automatic, coin-operated, dry-cleaning machines in your fraternity house and in all the other 40 houses on

the campus (assuming you could get the franchise or finance it individually). First you'd like to know if these dry cleaners you see advertised in *Time* could be used economically in the fraternity houses (around 40 men to a fraternity and 60 women to a sorority). As a student with more ambition than money, you are looking for an opportunity to earn extra money while putting your spare time to good use. Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Commercial Laundry Equipment Sales Department, Mansfield, Ohio, probably can give you the answers on cost, feasibility, power requirements, safety precautions, and financing for both an individual fraternity and a franchised agency. Some of the sororities have installed coin-operated washing machines on a franchise basis (they keep 15 per cent of the money collected).

3. Assume that you are W. T. Parham, traveling salesman for Purina, St. Louis 1, Missouri. You see the following ad in *Travel* magazine. "Radar Sentry, new all-electronic radar detector for cars. 20,000 sold in last two years in Chicago area. Backed by Good Drivers' League of America. Miniaturized—completely transistorized. Small, compact ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ " W x 2" D x 2" H). Weight 13 ounces. No wires. No antenna. 1,000-hour self-testing battery. Return in 10 days if not satisfied. Company: Radatron, Inc., 231 Zimmerman Street, North Tonawanda, N.Y."

Get price and method of paying. Find out how you install the Sentry. How soon is the motorist alerted before he enters the radar-controlled speed zone? (As much as you hate to admit it, you have been picked up for speeding two times during the past year.)

4. Mrs. Peter Paul Adams, 1809 West Church Street, Aurora, Illinois, read your ad in the *Chicago Daily News*: "Higgins Reconditioned Bicycle Shop, 589 Grant Street, Chicago. For sale—150 light-weight bicycles, Green, Red, Blue. Sizes 20-inch (recommended for ages 5, 6, 7) \$20, 24-inch (for ages 7, 8, 9) \$25, 26-inch (over 9) \$30. Light weight, seat with coil springs, long handle bars. All rubber tires. Coaster brakes. Red Safety reflector." Billy Jean, her six-year-old daughter, has been following her eleven-year-old sister and two neighborhood children, eight and ten, around the block on her three-wheeler but is plainly unhappy about having to. Mrs. Adams has visited many bicycle shops in search of a two-wheeler with two balancing wheels, because she feels that in a year or two she could take the side wheels off and Billy Jean would have a good bike. But all the shops she visited had two- and four-wheelers for \$45-\$65, even \$75. She had hoped to pick up an inexpensive bike that would do between now and when her eleven-year-old tired of her two-wheeler. Before getting too excited over the \$20 price in Higgins' ad, she writes to find out whether there are any reconditioned bikes with the nontip balancing wheels. What if the bicycle breaks down—is there any guarantee? If there are any with side wheels, what sizes

are they in? According to the ad a 20-inch would be about right. And color does matter; Billy Jean wants red! Are the all-rubber tires new too? Are the bikes made up of old damaged bikes? If she is willing to pay delivery charges both ways, will Higgins send one for a free trial? Assume that you are Mrs. Adams and write this direct inquiry.

5. *To:* Engineering department, Piper Aircraft Company, Post Office Box 913, Tiber River Creek, Texas. *From you:* pilot, senior in industrial engineering, University of Florida, Gainesville. Writing research paper on "Human Engineering Aspects of Cockpit Panel Design." *Wanted:* Why the instruments are grouped in the order in which they appear in Piper aircraft. Maybe company has printed literature. Paper due in four weeks.
6. *To:* C. J. Tagliabue Manufacturing Company, Park and Nostrand Avenues, Brooklyn, N.Y. *From you:* professor of chemical engineering in your school. *Wanted:* New copy of *Tag Manual for Inspectors of Petroleum*—invaluable in such experiments as fuel distillation and oil viscosity. Present copy in poor condition. Used by approximately 120 students yearly. Free.
7. *To:* Dean, Graduate School, University of Tennessee, P.O. Box 176, Knoxville, Tennessee. *From you:* senior in electrical engineering at your school. Upon graduation, in two months, plan to enter a university with an advanced graduate control-theory program. *Wanted:* Graduate student curricula in electrical engineering and the number of graduate courses in the field of electrical control and the number of quarter-system hours required for a Master's degree in electrical engineering. Also, does the degree have a nonthesis option.
8. When you helped plan a sorority house for 45 women, you and your committee omitted an incinerator because of high cost (architect said it would add another thousand dollars) and because you thought the local garbage service would do a fair job.

After several years of careful financial management, you now have several thousand dollars that can be spent. And the garbage pick-up service has been most unsatisfactory. From the contract division manager, E. P. Mullins, of the firm that installed the kitchen, you learn that Mr. Hal P. Lyemarce, Lyemarce Building Contractors, Inc., Box 987, Jacksonville, Florida, is an authority on incinerators. As Mrs. Harry Kendall, Box 634, Gainesville, Florida, write Mr. Lyemarce asking him what size he recommends and what the price would be. Even though you house 45, you average feeding 80 people at each of the noon and evening meals (only about 50 at breakfast). Make it clear that you have no stack that could be used. Also get size of stack needed. The house at the back is 34 feet high. How much above the peak of the roof does this incinerator stack need to be?

9. Assume that you are George A. Moeller, 41 Country Club Lane, Sacramento 4, California. As a do-it-yourself type of man you want to build a hi-fi recording set, radio, and TV. You plan to put it along a wall of your 15 x 15-foot den. Write Floatwood Television Company, Glendora, California, manufacturers of sets designed for built-ins. Besides wanting to know price, you are also interested in size of screen. Find out if the controls go in the frame next to the picture or are mounted below. Even though you think you know how to build, ask the company if this is easy to install. Will the present aerial (designed for 21-inch Plutorius) do? And does this built-in TV come in color, and if so what is the difference in price between the black and white and color?
10. For the basement of one of your three apartment buildings (four apartments in each building) write The Stephens Company, Ripon, Wisconsin, to find out the sizes of the Stephens Splish-Splash, Model A-20C, commercially built washing and drying machines. Ask which type of dryer Stephens recommends (gas or electric). Do the machines have to be bolted down and do the coin meters come on the machines or do they have to be mounted? If the meters have to be mounted, who mounts them? Do the machines have special cycles for nylons and dacrons? Assume that you are Emmett Watson, Apt. B-1, 1100 Baker Drive, Madison 4, Wisconsin.
11. *Encyclopaedia World* wrote you offering 24 volumes of the *World* at a special discount (for educators, \$259 instead of the regular price of \$375). Although as an educator (assume specific plausible conditions) you do not need a set for yourself, you would like to purchase the books for the fraternity you work with as an alum advisor. Write *Encyclopaedia World*, 2824 Linden Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois, for permission to buy the books at the educational rate. Get details on tax, shipping costs, and cost of the bookcase that you can buy to hold the books. Also find out about possible yearly supplements and what they would cost.
12. In your real estate company where you employ two salesmen and one secretary you need an intercom system for the four of you. To find out if all four units of the Star system could be used at the same time, write the General Electric Company, Radio Receiver Department, Utica, New York. What parts need to be replaced regularly and what guarantees apply? Since your company is moving to a new location soon, you'll appreciate the answer to these questions right away. Find out price also, and if the price includes installation.
13. To enjoy your motor trips more next summer, you feel that you will like binoculars. Your local dealers have none that suit you; so you write Carl Zeiss, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, about the Hensoldt Wetzlar diaspore prism binocular, which is made in West Germany, that weighs only 8 ounces, and that you see advertised

in this month's *Sports Illustrated*. "Easily fits your pocket. Its field of view covers 520 yards at a distance of 1,000 yards. All moving parts enclosed—utmost protection against dust and moisture. Finest optical quality guaranteed by Hensoldt's century-old reputation. In leather case or pouch."

Besides finding out the price you want to know if the price includes the carrying case. And the phrase "finest optical quality guaranteed" is not enough for you. Find out how long the guarantee lasts and if it includes replacement or repair of all defective parts without charge. Will these binoculars focus at full power without haze or blur?

14. Getting up several times a night to let your three-foot, ninety-five-pound German shepherd out has become a pain in the neck. "Why be a Doorman for your Pet?" says a headline in this month's *Esquire*. The copy reads "Flex Port ends scratched doors and whining. Keeps out flies, wind, rain. Gives you and dog or cat complete freedom. Soft plastic triangles close gently and tightly. Easy to install. Send now for free folder. Turen, Inc., Dept. E-92, Cottage Ave., Danvers, Mass." But would the door be large enough for your shepherd—and what about cost of the door as well as the installation cost? Where you live you have heavy rainfall, especially during February, March, and April. Ask the company if this door will protect the inside of the house against severe weather. And what is the price?
15. *U.S. News and World Report* has an ad by Thomas A. Edison Industries, West Orange Beach, New Jersey, on a new, advanced dictating instrument, the Voicewriter. "If you dictate as few as 3 letters a day, Voicewriter pays for itself in less than a year," the copy says. It gives you no price. After looking in the Yellow Pages under dictating machines (as the ad suggests) and finding none listed, you write direct to the company, and ask for price details, warranty, and details of construction, performance, use. Find out if it uses multiple-track tapes. If not, you want information about multiple-track models. Also, nothing was said about the speed and tone controls. Find out about them. Assume that you are an executive who dictates at least 20 letters a day and many days you send out 50.
16. As a member of a university dance band, you want to get an amplifier which would stand rough treatment and yet provide long service. You've been told that the Electro Voice SP 12 B speaker is suitable for use with an amplifier such as the Eico Model HF-81 advertised by the Eico Electronic Instrument Company, 3300 Northern Boulevard, Long Island City, New York. But is it suitable? What would be the cost, the guarantee; and where could you see such an amplifier?
17. Even though your education building of your church was finished four years ago, there was no provision for central air conditioning. Even though the building is used only a few days a week, air con-

ditioning is desirable (assuming you live in warm, humid climate). An ad with the headline, "TRANE for any Air Conditioning" catches your eye today. To get more details write Trane Company, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Your two-story, fourteen-room brick building has twelve small windows and two large windows. It is insulated and weather stripped. There are two furnaces (one on each floor). Ask Trane for prices on window units as well as two central units. Also, you're interested in mechanical guarantee, the servicing, and installation.

18. During hunting season you plan to be in the swamplands of Louisiana and need some comfortable water-repellent boots. After trying the local market, you write to Red Wing Shoe Company, 121 Main Street, Red Wing, Minnesota, asking the price for the Irish Setter Sport Boot advertised in *Sports Illustrated*. Perhaps Red Wing Shoe could tell you the name of the nearest local dealer as well as what the soles are made of and whether or not the boots come in your size. If there isn't a dealer nearby, could you order direct from Red Wing?
19. Mrs. P. M. Pride, 449 Crabapple Road, Mayslick, Kentucky (that's you), writes O. M. Scott and Sons, Maryville, Ohio, asking about the best grass seed for a shady lawn (big trees) and how much it would cost. Also she wants to know the nearest lawn-consulting service.
20. Imagine that you are about ready to begin building a home for yourself and your family; it will be, as you plan it, a house of three bedrooms, two baths, living room, dining room, and kitchen. You've worked out most details, but the question of heat is still bothering you. In the evening paper, however, you read the write-up about the radiant glass heating apparatus of Universal Corporation, Cincinnati, and immediately you think that this may be the answer to your problem. Electric wall panels (20" x 30") have individual room thermostats. They heat without burning draperies or furniture that's placed near; yet they have ultraviolet ray benefits and are clean (no dust or lint). They operate quietly (no clicking or blowing), and they take little space. With no more to go on than the article, you write direct to find out such details as cost, availability, operating costs, safety, reliability, method and cost of installation, and any other plausible question that comes to your mind. Since this is an inquiry which requires no motivation of the reader for a favorable response, you will begin directly with a request for information—with no explanation first. Ask at least four questions.
21. *To:* Solventol Chemical Products, Inc., 15841 Second Boulevard, Detroit 3, Michigan. *From:* your mother. *Wanted:* suggestions for removing and preventing water spots on tableware washed in dishwasher; no trouble while using sample of Dish-Dri that came with washer. D-Dri not available in stores. Where get? Price?

22. As a local engineer, you have the job of ventilating your small church. Maybe a propeller ventilating fan in each end gable. Slight knowledge of its products makes you think of the Clearage Fan Company, Kalamazoo, Michigan. *Wanted:*
- performance curves (engineer's way of saying volume of air flow produced at different speeds) and specifications (figures describing sizes, motor power and rate of use of electricity);
  - suggestions for best fans and least expensive installation;
  - prices, and possible discount for a church. *Conditions:* low noise level necessary; 4,800 sq. ft. floor space (60' x 80'); thinking of two fans, each at least 5,000 fm (feet of air volume per minute), but might use one at least 10,000 fm; prefer fan no more than five feet high (easy handling, better looks; less weakening of church structure; maybe better economy).
23. *Inquire for:* Kenneth Parks, personnel director, Cole Supply Company (large distributors for plumbing and light fixtures), Chicago, Illinois. *Prospective employee:* Miss Harriett Danforth, 4045 Prospect Avenue, Evanston, Illinois. *Write:* Mr. Henry Moore, instructor in communications, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Miss Danforth has applied for the editorship of the house publication, *Cole-ways*. During her four years of college she majored in English, minored in journalism. She has had no work experience except grading two semesters for Moore. The job requires someone with an understanding of layout, photography, proofreading, and of course someone who can write clearly in readable and enjoyable style. *Cole-ways* is mailed to old and new customers as well as to stockholders and employees. Ask Moore about Harriett's writing skill and her ability to proofread. She would have to get along with all the employees. Can she? Parks asked her to bring samples of her writing and samples of the layout work she had done, but she brought nothing, and sent nothing. Would there be any reason for her not bringing samples of her work?
24. As Matson Beal, director of new products, Durina Foods, St. Louis 5, Missouri, write to the placement director of your school for a lead on an ambitious, quick-thinking graduate. Your company has just put out a new minute-flow cereal for babies and has plans for other quick-frozen baby foods. You need a hardworking man who is willing to travel and who is also willing to live different places in the U.S. or Europe. The first six months are spent on the usual type of training program (visiting plants, writing reports, selling, keeping books). Starting salary of \$5,200, but raises are frequent and rapid. You're interested in talking with students whose grades average *B* or above.
25. *Inquire for:* Morris Bayer, personnel director, Goodhour Company, Dayton, Ohio. *Prospective employee:* Mathew Jones, former student assistant for three years. *Write:* Howard Anderson, professor of management, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Find out what type of

worker and what type of student Mathew was. Ask pertinent questions about his personality and character. At Goodhour he would have to supervise fifteen secretaries. Also he would be expected to take part in some public relations activities (make talks to luncheon groups and conduct in-service meetings).

26. *Inquire for:* Harold Van Voorhis, owner, Toggery Men's Shop, Austin, Texas. *Prospective employee:* Robert James, 20, former bookkeeper, Texas Power Company, Dallas. *Write:* Edwin Rosen, head bookkeeper at Texas Power. Robert quit high school during his senior year, but he says he had all the commercial courses offered at the Dallas High School. Ask Rosen what type of worker (how efficient a bookeeper) Robert was while he was in the employ of Texas Power. Since you will use him not only to keep books but to take inventory, wait on trade, and help with the windows, find out if Rosen thinks Robert could do all of these jobs. Your trade is mostly with University of Texas students and faculty members. You would like to train Robert so that he could take over in your absence; so he must be dependable. Does Rosen think that Robert has the ability to stick with a job? How long did Robert work for Texas Power?

### Direct Replies

1. As Mr. Henry Moore (Case 23, preceding section), write Kenneth about Miss Harriett Danforth. *Facts:* She graded for you two semesters —actual practice in proofreading and editing. About 150 students each semester, 4,500 pieces of written communications.

As your former student: hardworking, determined, gregarious. Earned an *A* in your advanced writing course. Got along with people; member of YWCA, honorary for junior women, and the women's swimming team. You do not know why she did not send samples of her work.

2. As Matson Beal (Case 24, preceding section), you got the name of J. H. Whitney, 6476 Powers Lane, Battle Creek, Michigan. He apparently is an ambitious, quick-thinking graduate. Write him and ask him to come to your office a week from Friday (new products, Durina Foods). Whitney wrote you a very detailed application letter persuasively setting forth why he thinks he'd be a good choice to manage the Paris office your company plans to open in about a year.

You have an opening for a young man. And even though Whitney has been working for your competitor for three years and is still, he would still have to go through an indoctrination period. Set the time and ask him to confirm the appointment. Naturally you expect to pay his expenses. Offer to make a hotel reservation for him if that would be a convenience.

3. Reply to Morris Bayer (Case 25, preceding section) about Mathew Jones, your student assistant for three years. Mathew is intelligent, hardworking, insecure-feeling, faithful. Will graduate this year with

an over-all average of *B*. He faithfully graded your papers and accurately recorded all the marks. Many times he would talk with you about his philosophy of the world. From your talks you gathered he wanted to make money (about the only sign of success to his generation), he wanted to work hard, get married, have about four children, and travel. You found him easy to talk with and easy to understand. You have never heard him talk to a luncheon group or seen him conduct a meeting.

4. Answer the letter from Harold Van Voorhis (Case 26, preceding section) about Robert James. Robert worked efficiently and accurately while with Texas Power for 26 months. In his job he had almost no contact with outsiders, but he seemed to get along well with the personnel in the office. He talked about returning to high school in order to graduate and then going on to college. He seemed to have vision and a willingness to learn and to understand the world about him. To your knowledge he did return to night school, but you have no assurance that he earned his high-school diploma. You recall that he did take some art courses on the side. Perhaps his courses and his interest in art could help him on decorating store windows.
5. Send a favorable report on an 18-year-old graduate of Sewanee Military School, Sewanee, Tennessee. Hugh Blair finished with honors, edited the yearbook (*the Saber*), was band commander, and earned the top award, the saber. Hugh wants you to write a letter about him to one of the armed forces academies, where he is applying for admission. As Hugh's neighbor, you watched him grow into a hard-working, ambitious young man. His love of independence and of freedom is explained partly, you think, by his family background. Mother and father were divorced when he was six. Mother remarried when he was ten. Hugh preferred to live with his devoted grandparents. They indulged him in every way. He has traveled extensively and lived expensively. His gracious manner and good looks are also in his favor. Write a report on this young maverick.
6. Reply to John Bearsley, in charge of training, Bank of Colorado, Denver, about Paul J. Wheeler, 25, formerly in the small loans department of the biggest bank in your town (where you are in charge). Paul graduated from University of Illinois two years ago and then worked for you six months. He wanted to move west, was restless—the man-on-the-move type. Ambitious lad who wants big money fast. Interested in trust department. Makes good impression. Quick to learn. Made many suggestions for changes. Has applied to Bearsley for work in his trust department.
7. A young executive trainee in Des Moines, you have frequently attended alumni meetings of your professional business fraternity, Beta Kappa Phi. It's a good group; you enjoy the programs and the con-

tacts. At a recent meeting you met the national president, and the two of you talked enthusiastically about the worthwhile activities of the fraternity for college men as well as businessmen. You knew you made a favorable impression on him, but you're surprised to receive his letter this morning, asking you to become the state supervisor for Iowa. A quick look in your directory shows you that there are only six chapters, no one of them more than 150 miles from you. And, you reason, all the meetings are in the evening—you wouldn't have to miss many working hours; the fraternity pays traveling expenses; it means only about three trips a month (none in the summer). The more you think about it, the more the idea appeals to you. So you decide to write Mr. Ned Sanderson, President, Beta Kappa Phi, 6097 Fisher Building, West Grand Avenue, Detroit, telling him you'll accept the appointment and asking for further necessary instructions and materials.

8. Sit in for Edward M. Burrow, director of the U.S. Information Agency, Washington 25, D.C., and write Samuel P. Oliver, President, Interfraternity Council, University of Illinois, Urbana, and agree to speak at a Council retreat from 3 to 4 the 28th of next month and to answer questions for another half hour afterward. Subject he proposed is all right: "How the Fraternity System Can Survive." Only prop needed is blackboard. Will arrive by plane 11 A.M. Appreciate Oliver's suggestions: meet on arrival; but need no hotel room. Flying back that evening.
9. As promotion director, Direct Advertising Association, 1220 Dearborn Avenue, Detroit 1, write Professor Marlin D. Miles, College of Commerce, University of Kentucky, Lexington, and agree to send the direct-mail campaigns that won awards during the last five years. May be kept two months so students can study them. Will send express collect; he to return them express prepaid.
10. For Miss Eleanor Stephens, Tutor House, New York 16, write Harry P. Bankhead, Director, Civic Center, Birmingham 1, Alabama, that she (an internationally known opera star) will come (by plane arriving 4 P.M.) the 11th of next month and sing at 8:15 for the benefit performance. Will not attend the dinner party for local bigwigs—needs to rest. Gladly accepts Bankhead's suggestions of meeting at airport and making hotel arrangements (two rooms, for herself and male accompanist).
11. As director of the Educational Testing Service, Cooperative Test Division, Princeton, N.J., write Miss Susan Beale, 90 The Highlands, Cleveland 31 (teacher at Shaker Heights High School), that you are sending copies of Sequential Tests of Educational Progress and the book she requested, *Testing the High School Student*. Good choices she made. Tests, book, and test manual all helpful in counseling and preparing students for college entrance exams. Special attention: pp. 17-20 of manual on "How to Take Objective Tests."

12. Answer Product Inquiry 5: Piper doesn't have information requested. Write sales publicity department for pictures of our instrument panels if they will help. Civil Aeronautics Board has developed a standard cockpit design. We follow it. C. A. B. *Bulletin 29* and Supplement 3N explain.
13. Answer Product Inquiry 6: Old tag manual doesn't fit modern fuels and oils. Sending new one. Ask for names and addresses of colleagues who might be interested. New manual is loose leaf—easier to keep up to date. Will send new pages as they're printed.
14. Answer Product Inquiry 7: M.S. in E.E. requires 40 quarter hours at Tennessee. Ten may be thesis. Offer to answer specific questions after student has read brochure you're sending on graduate work in electrical engineering. Control-theory courses marked in red. Suggest early application to University and to Graduate School. Thus papers can clear before new quarter begins.

### Replies about Products (Invited Sales)

1. Answer Product Inquiry 21: Dish-Dri is new; distribution system not complete. Dealer, or reader, can order from us. Send another sample to help until reader can buy full-size box. Should remove water spots first washing and prevent future trouble. If doesn't remove, rub hard and long with a little D-D in warm water.
2. Answer Product Inquiry 22: Dubious about using two P105's—5,000 fm; 5 ft. diameter. Specifications, performance curves, and prices (church discount shown) on it and P1065 (10,000 fm; 6.5' diameter) enclosed. Big one better if you can install: cost 20 per cent less; uses 15 per cent less power for same air volume; two opposing small ones would work against each other; both low noise level (because run at low speeds); both have air-directing louvers (can be closed completely against rain, snow, cold seasons).
3. Answer Product Inquiry 2 with the following information: "Do-it-yourself" dry cleaner economical in fraternity or sorority house. Choice of two power systems—115 volts, 60 cycle, single phase; 230 volts, 60 cycle, three phase. Installation requires only power supply and a vent to the outside. No hazards. All wiring is covered and insulated. User has no direct access to the cleaning fluid. Unit costs \$580. With 60 members in a chapter averaging \$5 a month for cleaning expense, the coin-operated machine could soon be paid for. One machine holds 9½ pounds of clothing. Cleaning takes 10 minutes. Wash-and-wear clothes can be worn without any ironing. Suggest you call on Greene and work out payment details. Usual charge is \$2 per load. Operating the machine for one load costs the owner about 50¢.
4. As the marketing manager, O.M. Scott and Sons (Product Inquiry 19), answer the letter of Mrs. P. M. Pride. Tell her that zoysia and St.

Augustine best for shade but costly—must be sprigged; hard to start from seed. Bluegrass and fescue grow well in shade. Plant in the fall; will come up in spring. A mixture of the two is best. Scott's Shady Lawn Mix runs \$1 per pound or about  $\frac{1}{2}\phi$  a square foot.

Scott's Turf Builder fertilizer could be mixed with the seed when using a Scott Spreader. The fertilizer should be applied when sowing. She can apply 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet at a cost of almost  $\frac{1}{10}\phi$  per square foot (a 100# sack costs \$5). This mixture contains just enough rye grass to give green lawn in winter.

Green Thumb Garden Center in Warsaw, Kentucky, handles Scott's products; also provides a free lawn-consulting service.

A soil test is a must before embarking on any lawn-improvement program.

5. Answer Product Inquiry 3: Radar Sentry alerts motorists entering radar-controlled speed zones with an electronic "beep" within one-fourth-mile range of speed check. Radar Sentry feels radar impulses which are focusing on a moving car from 1,200 to 1,500 feet away—about 1,000 feet beyond the critical point where a police monitor can begin measuring speed with accuracy. Requires no installation. Magnetic base holds firmly on dash, equipped with clip for sunvisor mounting. Costs \$39.95. Money-back guarantee. COD orders accepted. Charge to Diners' Club Account (give card number and signature). Requires no antenna—no wires, has 1,000-hour, self-testing battery. Completely transistorized. In last two years 20,000 have been sold in Chicago area. Backed by Good Drivers' League of America.
6. As Hal P. Lyemarce, answer Product Inquiry 8. Recommend Model V-100, manufactured by McNaulin, Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is a completely self-contained, "packaged" valcanor that handles 175 pounds per hour. Besides having interlocked, steel-clad refractory sections, it has heavy angle framing and special automatically controlled gas burners. It weighs 2,200 pounds, measures 92 inches long, 42 inches high. The stack must clear the highest point of roof by four feet. It measures 10 inches diameter cylindrical, is made up of three-foot sections with outer jacket of aluminum to eliminate maintenance. Cost of incinerator plus nine sections of stack runs \$1,760 including freight. Installation adds \$250 more. Company prefers that Mrs. Kendall employ a local sheet-metal worker to put pieces of stack together and have local plumber run gas to unit. *Sales theme:* Stress the desirability of keeping all the refuse burned. Better health standards can be maintained. Also stress ease of neat housekeeping.
7. As director of sales, Floatwood Television Company, answer Product Inquiry 9.  
*Facts on case:* Price for black and white runs around \$400. Floatwood features a new 21-inch focus-type picture tube. This tube allows housing to be less than 12 inches deep. This depth makes the right kind of space for bookcase to be worked in around parts of the

built-in. Model 900 has all controls grouped on the set while Model 910 provides controls on a remote unit. It is easy to install. Present aerial should do. Many people prefer joining the cable, however. Built-ins come in color (\$600). Picture quality is so fine for black and white that you can see the individual eyelash on a pretty girl. Many television stations use Floatwood home receivers to monitor their own broadcasts.

8. Answer Product Inquiry 11—from Professor A. J. Butts at the nearby university. The bookcase would add \$39.50; sales tax will be \$8.96 for a total of \$307.46. The set comes to the professor prepaid and insured. The yearly supplement would be desirable for the fraternity (Beta Upsilon Phi). To subscribe to it costs \$15 a year. Resell the volumes and talk up the supplements—to keep up to date. You can be in the college town Thursday of next week. The offer is on for a limited time (three more weeks exactly).
9. Answer Product Inquiry 10: No bolting necessary for dryers or washers. Ten inches free space at back recommended for repairman to remove back panel in order to have access to transmission and water mixing valve. Buyer pays for installation. It is impossible to estimate installation cost from home office. Price of washer delivered \$251.50. Price of automatic gas dryer, No. 134, \$217.50, and for automatic electric dryer, No. 108, \$267.50. Electric dryer is safer and more dependable than gas dryer. Meters can be mounted in porcelain top or on side of this model, wherever he prefers. Price includes mounting of meters. Sizes of dryers and washers are 42" high (including 6" dial panel), 26" deep, 25" wide. The washing machines have special cycles for nylons and dacrons. Bowl-shaped tub helps water action. Send pictures of automatic dryers and washers and ask for an appointment for one of your representatives to go to Madison.
10. Answer the letter in Product Inquiry 20 for the Universal Corporation in Cincinnati. Mr. James M. Kirby of North Platte, Nebraska, is considering your electric wall panels for his new home; he likes the noiseless feature, and his wife likes the cleanliness angle. He has included a sketch of his home with room measurements and indicated the kind of insulation he will use. He and Mrs. Kirby are concerned, however, about the possibility of burns to their two children, four and six; about the necessity for additional heavy-duty wiring (with its additional expense); about the costs of operation; and the problems of installation and maintenance in an area where no one, as far as they can find out, has ever heard of your Radiant Glass Panel. A person can touch the exposed surface without burning himself, though if he held his hand to the surface long enough he would, of course, suffer injuries. Additional wiring is necessary, too, but the units operate on 110 volts, not 220. From his sketch you calculate that one unit will heat every room adequately, with the exception of the living room, where he will need two. That makes a total of nine units. Since the

units operate most efficiently if no more than three are on one circuit, he should plan on three additional circuits beyond what he is already estimating. They may involve as much as \$50 additional expense for wiring—cheaper than the metal ducts and grills of a forced-air or hot-water central heating system. Any reliable electrician can install them; they're no more complicated than a light fixture which is flush with the ceiling or wall. Once installed, there's nothing like a light bulb to burn out and replace. Costs of operation are higher than for gas or oil, certainly. But the rate is almost certain to be lower than the minimum 3¢ per kilowatt hour ordinarily charged by private power companies. With all the electrical appliances that modern homes have, heating costs accumulate at 2¢ or 1½¢ and usually at 1¢ per kilowatt hour. Furthermore, radiant heat at 68° is as comfortable as other forms of heating at 72°. Also, with the individual room thermostats, Radiant Glass Panel users do not have to keep some rooms as warm as others. Users in the area around Cincinnati have heated five-room homes during the cold season for \$150 additional electricity beyond what they had consumed prior to using radiant heating. (In TVA areas, of course, the costs are much lower; owners of 1,500-square-foot houses heat with electricity for as little as \$8 a month.) You can assure Mr. Kirby that his nine panels would maintain his house (with its insulation in side walls as well as ceiling) at 68° for a month of zero weather at a cost of no more than \$30. Repeated tests in your own experimental laboratory have demonstrated this, and the experience of 20,000 users in all areas have confirmed it. Radiant Glass Panels are approved by Underwriters' Laboratory Association. You guarantee the units against defective workmanship for one year. No dealer anywhere near Mr. Kirby. You'll sell to him direct for \$75 a panel, cash with order, f.o.b. Cincinnati (your usual charge is \$85 a panel installed). Stress again the benefits of the ultraviolet rays, easier housekeeping, and the advantages of individual room temperatures when desired.

### Orders

1. Hugh Partlow, owner of Partlow's Barber Shop, Rockford 1, Illinois, has expanded and needs to order two more barber chairs. From Belvedere Products, Inc., Belvedere, Illinois, he orders two of Model 7020 at the special price of \$89.50 each, to be sent COD. The mailing from Belvedere said that the chair had heavy-duty pump mechanism, tilt-toe rest, and rubber foam seat. Also order one Model 8659 chrome manicuring table, \$49.50, and three E-Se Flo shampoo dispensers, \$4.95 each.
2. To stimulate impulse sales in the men's store, of which you are manager in your college community, order the following equipment from L. A. Sparling Company, Bronson, Michigan: 4 CI09 Signholders @ \$3.12; 1 RC-3R Double-bar rack, \$122.85; 1 R2-12 Single-bar rack, \$60.33; 2 R75 Slack racks @ \$79.20. Enclose check for the equipment

and request shipment via least expensive method, shipping charges collect.

3. Assume that you live a hundred miles from the campus and have registered to take three of your present courses by correspondence. Order the textbooks for the courses from your college bookstore. (Give title, author's full name, publisher, place of publication, date of publication.) Specify used or new copies. Send check or money order for approximately half of total. Request to ship COD for balance plus tax and shipping charges.
4. You are manager of the Mary Hall Candy Shop, Huntingburg, Indiana. Send a check and deduct 2 per cent discount for the following: 1 gross of boxes with spaceman motif, No. A-15 for packing  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.; 2 gross, No. A-12 for packing 1 lb.; each is \$14 a gross. Also order 2 gross (@ \$24) special holiday boxes for packing 2 lbs. Shipping charges via motor freight add \$5.80. Address order to Indianapolis Box Company, 4689 South Main Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.
5. As owner of Towne Beauty Shop, your town, order 10 dozen pairs of Pinkies (disposable plastic gloves for tinting and dyeing, bleaching, shampooing, and permanent waving; \$3 a dozen) from Pow Chemical Company, Wilmington, Delaware. Also order three size-12 uniforms, 100% Swanglow poplin with ruggatex wash-wear finish. Price is \$14.99 each. Short sleeves preferred. Explain that you are a new shop with a growing business. You would like to open an account. But for this order ask Pow to bill you and you'll send a check.
6. Order from Charmant Mannequins, St. Louis 10, Missouri. Your store: The Hobby House, Jefferson City, Missouri. Two men's mannequins, No. 9876, one-piece papier-mache bodies (permanently attached composition heads, removable plastic arms with detachable rubber hands). Price \$97.50 each. Send via motor freight subject to usual credit terms. You have established credit.
7. Assume the conditions of any of the acknowledgments. Write the order letter in the situation.
8. *To:* Texas Equipment and Supply Company, Dallas. *From:* John P. Chandler, owner, Longhorn Restaurant, University Avenue, Austin, Texas. *Order:* 1 Hobart dishwasher, Model AMA, \$1,350; 1 Scotsman ice maker, SF-75 WSF, 200-pound size, \$749; 1 Refrigerator, Model RA-408, \$735. Tax and shipping charges, \$96.70. Total \$2,930.70. Installation included in price. Equipment to be paid for in 60 days. Three per cent discount for cash within 15 days.
9. *To:* Red Duck Shoe Company, St. Louis, Missouri. *From:* John E. Swift, owner, Central Shoe Store, Bloomington, Indiana. *Order:* 3 dozen men's insulated rubber pack boots (wholesale \$7.95), 1 dozen

each in sizes 10, 11, and 12; 3 dozen (sizes 10, 11, 12) men's rubber boots with 10-inch zipper opening (wholesale \$3.95). Terms: 2/10, n/30.

10. *To:* Playskool, New York 9, New York. *From:* Muskin's Gift Shop, San Angelo, Texas. *Order:* 2 dozen (J 5403) Playskool Building sets, \$2 each; 2 dozen (J 5417) Playskool Nok-out bench, \$1 each; 2 dozen Take-Apart Workbench (J 5436), \$1 each. Add \$9.10 for taxes and postage.
11. You are the owner-manager of the Quality Shoppe, 1293 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida. Send a rush order to Mary Case, Inc., a cosmetics company in North Philadelphia, requesting 2 doz. 1-oz. bottles Mary Case White Lilac Perfume, \$3.50 each; 2 doz. 2-oz. bottles of the same, \$6 each; 1 doz. 1-oz. bottles Mary Case Chestnut Perfume, \$3.50 each; 1 doz. 2-oz. bottles of the same, \$6 each; 3 doz. 6-oz. bottles Mary Case Fragrance Toilet Water, \$2.50 each; 3 doz. 10-oz. bottles Mary Case Jasmine Skin Lotion, \$1.50 each. You are an established credit customer. You want these sent air express, charges collect.

### Standard Acknowledgments

1. *To:* Mrs. Beaton Davis, owner-manager of Quality Shoppe, 1293 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida. *Send:* Rush shipment from Mary Case Inc., North Philadelphia: 2 doz. 1-oz. bottles Mary Case White Lilac Perfume, \$1.50 each; 2 doz. 2-oz. bottles of same, \$3 each; 1 doz. 1-oz. bottles Mary Case Chestnut Perfume, \$1.50 each; 1 doz. 2-oz. bottles of same, \$3 each; 3 doz. 6-oz. bottles Mary Case Fragrance Toilet Water, \$1.25 each; 3 doz. 10-oz. bottles Mary Case Jasmine Skin Lotion, 75¢ each. Send air express, shipping charges collect. Credit sale. *Resale:* Nationally advertised in *Seventeen*, *Glamour*. *Sales promotion* on bath oil: 2-oz. bottle, \$3 each.

2. *Acknowledge order* for furnishing of men's store from new customer, L. Aaron Christian, Manager, Carty Men's Shop, 342 University Lane, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

1 R6-3R Double-bar chrome rack .....	\$122.65
1 R2-12 Single-bar chrome rack .....	\$ 60.33
2 R75 Slack and pants chrome rack .....	\$158.40
Total .....	\$341.38
Shipping .....	\$ 8.46

*Your company:* L. A. Sparling Company, Bronson, Michigan, suppliers of racks and displays for men's shops. Ship by motor freight. Check for correct amount enclosed with order. *Allied sales:* New shirt display for counters and windows. Measures 18/36". Displays three shirts. Mirror-chrome finish stays bright and new looking. Price \$12.24. Invite credit (2/10, n/30). Send catalogue.

3. *To:* Hugh Partlow, owner, Partlow's Barber Shop, Warsaw, Indiana. *From:* Belvedere Products, Inc., Belvedere, Illinois. *Send:* 2 barber

chairs, Model 7020, \$89.50 each; 1 chrome manicurist table, Model 8659, \$49.50; 3 E-Se Flo Shampoo dispensers, No. D-796, \$4.95 each. By freight, shipping charges collect. Terms: 2/10, n/30. *Resale* on chair: heavy-duty pump mechanism, tilt-toe rest, rubber-foam seat.

4. As ordered, send 1 dozen Pinkies (disposable plastic gloves) for tinting and dyeing, bleaching, shampooing, and permanent waving (\$3 a dozen), to Mrs. Claude Powers, Towne Beauty Shop, East Lansing, Michigan, from your company, Pow Products, Wilmington, Delaware. She also ordered three short-sleeved, size 12, 100% Swanglow Poplin uniforms, priced at \$14.99 each. Invite her credit. Mrs. Powers sent check including \$1.75 shipping charges. Send catalogue. Talk fast deliveries on future orders.
5. *To:* Craig Canton, owner, Lansing Rug Company, East Lansing, Michigan. *From:* Salton Textile Company, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. *Send:*

12 No. 55 M 380 Rugs, 24" x 42", Duraweave looped  
cotton @ \$2.75 ..... . . . . . \$ 33.

6 No. 67 M 875 Rugs, 9' x 12', Duraweave, looped cotton \$360.

*Ship:* freight charges collect. Check for \$393 enclosed. *Resale:* Loops of rug durably lockstitched to heavy duck backing. Skid-resistant back guards against slipping. Fade-resistant colors. Washable. Pre-shrunk. Advertised in full-page ads in *Better Homes and Gardens* and *American Home*. *Resale on house:* Send catalogue. Enclose credit application blank and invite him to apply.

6. *To:* Steck Office Supply Company, Dayton 4, Ohio. *From:* Madison Manufacturing Company, Baltimore, Maryland. *Send:*

3 dozen black nylon typewriter ribbons for Standard Regal @ \$12 .. . . . .	\$36.00
1 box (24) Park ball-point pens @ .. . . . .	7.50
1 gross No. 2 Eagle red lead drawing pencils @ .. . . . .	8.00
COD shipping charges and COD fee add \$1.36 to total .. . . . .	1.36
	\$52.86

*Resale:* Park retails for \$1. Can get pen and red, green, blue, black ink. *Sales promotional:* "Brotch" brand typewriter cleaner made by Montansota Mining and Manufacturing Company. An 8½" x 11" sheet of soft fibrous material is chemically treated to remove dirt, old ink, and foreign matter. Use it once and the type on typewriter is clean. Three sheets sell for 98¢. You have envelope stuffers promoting these sheets if Steck wants them.

7. *To:* Decatur Hardware Company, 140 Prairie Street, Decatur, Illinois. *From:* National Hardware, Inc., 875 Wells Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. *Send:* 2 doz. Dunlap 3-cubic-foot wheelbarrows, \$5.50; 3 doz. Craftsman lawn rakes, \$1.50; 4 doz. Dunlap all-purpose shovel, \$2.50. Ship by freight, shipping charges collect. Check covered garden supplies ordered. *Sales promotional:* Craftsman riding rotary mower,

\$250 retail. Three-wheel model. Dashboard has one fingertip lever for forward, neutral, and reverse; another for throttle settings of stop, idle, start, light cutting, and heavy cutting. Drive for order of Craftsman rotary mower. Customers can sit while they mow.

- As your instructor directs, write the standard acknowledgment for any of the orders described in the preceding section.

## Credit Approvals

- To: G. R. Morman, Morman Service Station, Olathe, Kansas. From: H and M Automotive Parts Company, Kansas City, Missouri. Credit: 3/10, n/60. Mr. Morman has built up a good gasoline service-station business (much of it monthly credit sales) during last five years. Credit Bureau reports he is slow in paying his personal bills fully. Because the battery-selling season is near, you approve credit but remind him of due dates and the advantages of cash discount. Send: 3 dozen auto batteries, totaling \$440. Will be shipped today.
- To: Howard J. MacKenzie, Manager, MacKenzie Furniture Store, Knoxville, Tennessee. From: Langford Furniture Company, Memphis, Tennessee. Send:

3 No. 135 XW 579 Chairs @ \$25.50 .....	\$ 76.50
12 No. 67 XS 798 Floor lamps @ 10.95 .....	131.40
12 No. 136 XZ 980 End tables @ \$24.50 .....	294.00
Freight .....	20.19
	<u>\$522.09</u>

Credit 2/10, n/60. The store has good rating in Dun & Bradstreet and is in a good location.

- M. C. Leslie, your salesman (Gregor Manufacturing Company, Portland, Maine) reports that Klein's Men's Shop, 984 Greenfield Street, Manchester, New Hampshire, has a good location, an energetic manager-owner (P. M. Klein), a fair stock, and good middle-class clientele. Leslie sends Gregor a first order with a request to approve the usual terms 2/10, n/30:

567A 1 dozen drizzler golf jackets, off-white (3 each in sizes 38, 40, 42, 44) @ \$12.00 .....	\$144.00
569E 1 dozen tan antifreeze jackets (3 each in sizes 38, 40, 42, 44) @ \$18.50 .....	222.00
Shipping charges .....	7.15
	<u>\$373.17</u>

Although Klein works hard, he is undercapitalized and has a record of slow pay. With a bank loan and some money he inherited from his father, he bought this small store. He has been running it just two years. Because you don't want him to buy any more than he can pay for in any one credit period, you are limiting his credit to \$500. To help him display the jackets, you send some window display cards and offer him envelope stuffers.

4. *You are:* Credit director, Ideal Toy Company, 3932 Broad Street, Baltimore Maryland. *Send to:* Foster's Gift Shop, Old Peterburg Road, Richmond, Virginia, the following:

J342 2 dozen Marjorie dolls (the teen-age fashion model) @ \$1.50 .....	\$ 36.00
J351 2 dozen Tim dolls (Marjorie's boyfriend) @ \$1.50 ...	36.00
J272 1 dozen sportscars for Marjorie and Tim @ \$3.50 ...	<u>42.00</u>
	\$114.00
Mailing charges and tax .....	4.27
	<u>\$118.27</u>

Terms: 2/10, n/30.

*Allied sales:* The Marjorie and Tim dolls now have a dream house and furnishings (size 26" x 14½" x 23", priced at \$5.50, 7 lbs. weight). Send catalogue that gives wardrobe description for Marjorie and Tim dolls.

5. *To:* Thelma Church, owner of Towne Beauty Shop, Lexington Shopping Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. *From:* Pow Chemical Company, Wilmington, Delaware. Approve credit 2/10, n/30. Order consisted of: three size-12 uniforms @ \$14.99, \$44.97; 10 dozen Pinkies, \$30. A new product to promote is your disposable plastic cape. Like the Pinkie gloves, the capes are used several times and then thrown away. Priced at \$3 a dozen. Send a catalogue along with the beauty supplies. Make ordering the capes easy.
6. It is your job as credit sales manager of the General Western Electric Company, Syracuse 10, New York, to credit a first order from Baughman's Appliance Store, 6532 Melbourne Street, Daytona Beach, Florida, for 1 dozen deluxe floor polishers, \$30 each; 1 dozen toast-ovens, \$20 each; 6 deluxe upright vacuum cleaners with 7 attachments, \$70 each. Total \$1,020. Shipping charges \$19.50. *Resale:* Toaster toasts bread, muffins, rolls. Bakes too. "Open bar" door opens automatically when bread is toasted. Special oven tray for baking included. *Sales:* GW automatic electric opener with power-piercing action, \$15. *Markup:* Generally around 40 per cent. Fast deliveries. Envelope stuffers can be sent.
7. You are the credit manager, Werner Specialty Company, 943 Brainerd Street, Minneapolis. *Write:* John P. Mize, proprietor, Mize Unusual Foods and Gifts, 753 Church Street, Little Falls, Minnesota. He sends the following information to show his financial condition: Annual sales \$30,000; total assets \$3,900; accounts payable, not due, \$600; no liability as bondsman or endorser. His references report him in good standing with all creditors. Write the letter to Mr. Mize approving the credit (2/12, n/30) and shipping the goods (imported English chocolates, \$2 a pound—4 tins ordered [3 pounds a tin]; 1 dozen cans of dilly beans @ 65¢ a can; 1 dozen cans of parsley cauliflower @ 65¢ a can; 1 dozen cans of French snails, \$1.25 a can). Send a new catalogue and suggest that you can send envelope stuffers.

8. *To:* George Mueller, owner, Mueller Furniture Company, Fulton, Kentucky. *From:* Inheritance Furniture Company, High Point, North Carolina. Credit of 2/10, n/30 approved. Your salesman, James Snow, reports that Mueller's store is orderly; he has good turnover and has good rating in Dun & Bradstreet. *Send:* Game table (\$110); 6 occasional cherry chairs, @ \$60; foam-cushioned sofa (\$245). Tax and shipping charges add \$35.17. *Resale on house:* Monthly ads in *House Lovely*. *Allied sales:* Feature this month: Make any plausible assumption about furniture.
9. As credit manager for the Debcraft Wholesalers, Atlanta, Georgia, you are going to approve Mr. Daniel Wade's request for credit. He operates the small Toggery Shop, 445 Prince Avenue, Athens, Georgia. Send him the following men's robes on terms of 2/10, n/30:

6 navy rayon robes, size 38, @ \$15 .....	\$ 90.00
6 wine rayon polka-dot print robes, size 36, @ \$12.50 .....	75.00
	<hr/> \$165.00

They are lightweight, easy to pack; have own matching snap-close case. Besides three roomy pockets, they have shawl collar and self-belt. Two references stated that on several occasions, especially during the summer, Mr. Wade had to be reminded of his overdue account. Another reference said he had always paid on time, and still another said only once in five years had he been reminded. As far as you can determine, his store is not in a busy district of Athens. He just relocated it, and his capital investment in the business doesn't make you feel that it is a thriving business. Until you determine whether or not he is keeping his account up to date, you are limiting his credit to \$250. You need to explain your credit terms and to educate him on the value of his taking advantage of the discount. You might want to tell him about your special on tan leather, soft-soled slippers by Aristo. They're usually \$7.50, but now are reduced to \$6.25 (sizes 6 to 14 in medium and wide widths). Send a catalogue which describes these slippers on page 47 and which describes some of your other products.

10. As credit sales manager for the Williams Silver Manufacturing Company, 543 Lancaster Road, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, write a credit approval to Mr. Arnold Vining, owner of Vining Jewelry Store, 3287 Cypress Avenue, St. Petersburg, Florida, which will prevent future collection problems and build future sales. Vining bought this store just a year ago. Before sending him the silver he ordered (4 butter dishes, \$4 each; 8 water pitchers, \$8 each; 2 casserole dishes [1½ quart capacity] \$15— total \$110, and \$5.98 shipping charges), you checked his references. The store has a great deal of competition from a long-established, large jewelry store which is in the same block. Vining had previous experience in this work while he worked for his father-in-law in Tallahassee. Grant him terms of 2/10, n/30. Point out that he earned this credit by his previous credit rating while in business.

As a close, tell him about the smartly styled sterling salt-and-pepper service, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high, \$4. Make ordering easy.

## Claims

1. As J. J. Morgan, superintendent, Trinity Methodist Church, Tallahassee, Florida, write adjustment manager, Star Furniture Manufacturing Company, 1987 Loop Road, Vicksburg, Mississippi. Tell the company that three of the tables that you bought just a month ago have bulging tops. Ask if you should send the tables back or if someone in Tallahassee can "iron them out." Trinity paid \$82.50 for each table. They have been well taken care of and have been in a dry Sunday-school room.
2. As a retailer of J. M. Cottonworth Stores, write to Mr. William F. Cook, Bell Fisheries, Bell Buckle, Tennessee, complaining about the 440 dead goldfish you received on invoice 6789. Cook sends 300 new fish at his own expense.

Now write Cook and report that nine are dead and the remainder are in poor condition and ask for an adjustment. Also remind him that the 300 did not replace the original 440 you ordered.

3. *For:* Philip B. Harris, Box J-245, University City, Pennsylvania. (Harris is a student at Penn State.) *To:* Potter's Camera Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. *Case:* Camera was dropped. Pictures are poorly focused. Guarantee covers any defect of workmanship or materials within one year of normal use. Harris purchased camera three months ago. Harris is returning camera.
4. As house manager for your independent house on campus, you purchased material for fifteen shower curtains from Marshall Awning Company, Atlanta, Georgia. The material cost \$65.24 and the labor ran to \$15. Material was supposed to be mildew proof and shrink resistant (no more than 4 per cent). After two months of use the curtains were spotted and had shrunk. After nine months' use and after trying several laundries (costs 25 cents for each curtain) the curtains have shrunk to 35" by 75" (originally were 38" by 80") leaving lots of space for water to pour out around the shower. Assume that you send a curtain and a letter requesting Marshall stand behind the material sold you as being heavy-duty duck, ideal for boats and for shower curtains. Ask replacement.
5. A gift of twelve Fostoria water goblets (\$3.75 each) sent to a bride, Miss June Scott, 11 Country Club Hills, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, arrives with three of the glasses broken. Write the claim letter for Miss Scott to The Little Red House, 1190 Pedro Street, Tucson, Arizona. The box was not damaged.
6. *Case:* Mrs. Richard's son, Tommy, received two blue shirts from his aunt in Columbus, Ohio (1110 University Place), some time ago—

she thinks maybe two weeks ago. They do not fit. She wants two new shirts in size 16, 33" sleeves, button cuffs. Write the letter for Mrs. R. G. Richards, 9 Southmoreland, Decatur, Illinois. Assume a store name and address on the package. She has no sales receipt.

7. One month ago, and 1,000 miles ago, you bought a new Dash car from a local dealer. At the time for your car's check-up, you are 800 miles from home. The dealer of Dash in this town where you are visiting refuses to check the car without cash payment of \$25. You show him the bill of sale and the booklet of instructions which includes some coupons for the regular check-ups. He insists that you do not have the correct coupons. Rather than argue with him, you let him do the check-up and then you write the dealer from whom you bought the car, asking him for the \$25 that you had to pay this garage man.
8. From Flor's Jewelry Store, Los Angeles 10, California, you purchase one silver-plated meat platter, \$25.95. *Problem:* Silver plate showed through after second using. *Request:* Ask new platter or resilver this one, and send to you, at 1905 Pasadena Avenue, Sacramento, California.
9. After having three new soap dispensers put on your automatic portable dishwasher (Model No. 587, 64790) during the one-year guarantee period, you refuse to pay the serviceman from Peers and Loebuck, who comes today to put the fourth dispenser on. It is true that the one-year guarantee has expired; you are now into the eighteenth month of using the machine. When you called the local store and talked with the manager, Victor Freeman, he suggested you write the home office in Chicago 5, Illinois, requesting payment of the service call. Explain to the management that you have always used the prescribed kind of soap and that you have been careful to run the machine yourself. You have always been careful to set the dial in the correct position and not run it around haphazardly.
10. Write Osaki Clothing Company, Hong Kong, Japan. Your suit, ordered three months ago, doesn't fit. Company guaranteed perfect fit and satisfaction. Local tailor agrees that extensive alterations needed at neck and shoulders. Return suit and ask for \$59.50 refund.
11. Write Remington Razor Company, Newark, New Jersey. Your razor will not shave evenly. You just had a new head put on two weeks ago. The 90-day guarantee is not up. Attach letter to package containing razor.

### Full-Reparation Adjustments

1. As adjustment manager for L. A. Sparling Company, Bronson, Michigan, write The Children's Shop, 2978 Brazos Street, Austin 4, Texas. You will send new plastic mannequin, M-808HNB, 8-year, \$77.13,

with auburn hair. Mannequin will replace damaged one sent last week. This new mannequin has removable one-piece arms and removable hands. Reason for damage: Truck was in accident and the freight was damaged. *Added sales:* New, popular 18-year-old mannequins (\$120.15) with molded hair, correctly-sized heads for hats and caps. Glass bases for any model run \$3.57 additional.

2. Mrs. F. T. Finch, 1560 Shore Drive, Grand Prairie, Nebraska, returns her Speedway iron to Balden's, Chicago 4, Illinois (a large mail-order outlet). She bought the iron two weeks ago. She reports it makes brown spots on the white clothes when she uses it. Send Mrs. Finch a new iron, but include some instructional material about the care of her iron in your letter. She is a good customer and you want to keep her. Also in your letter you could promote your electric skillets (11½" pan, \$19.95). (See Case 4, p. 361.)
3. As the manager of Lacy's, The Decorating Shop, New York, answer the complaint from Mrs. James P. Moore, South Shore Drive, Greenwich, Connecticut, about the oyster-white draperies you made for her. She claims that they were delivered and hung while she was gone. Her cleaning woman answered the door. They were soiled when they arrived. After checking with your workers, they confess that some machine oil got on one panel. To keep Mrs. Moore's business, you will make a new drapery, and your drapery expert will be out next week to hang it. Ask her to name a time when someone will be at home.
4. As the owner and manager, Bell Fisheries, Bell Buckle, Tennessee, answer R. C. Winstead's (Frisco Variety Store, Oak Ridge, Tennessee) letter about the fish you sent him. Two weeks ago you sent to him goldfish in your specially sealed tank. He wrote that 440 were dead. Promptly you sent 440 more fish at a cost to you of \$15. Winstead writes that nine were dead and the rest in poor condition. To keep this old, reliable customer you send 445 goldfish. Explain that in the summer months (especially from July 15 through August) handling and shipping of goldfish is most difficult.
5. *Company:* Star Furniture Manufacturing Company, 1987 Loop Road, Vicksburg, Mississippi, made twelve sturdy tables for your Sunday-school building (Trinity Methodist, Tallahassee, Florida). These \$82.50 tables had vinyl laminated on the top and on the edges of the top. They were purchased directly by J. J. Morgan, superintendent. "A month after the tables arrived three of them had bulging tops," Mr. Morgan writes. He also asks if he should send the tables back to you or if someone in Tallahassee can "iron them out."

After you check with the foreman who filled the order, you and he think the best thing to do is have them pressed out by Montgomery Woodworks Company in Tallahassee. Quickly you dashed off a note in which you asked Montgomery to check by the Trinity Methodist

Church and then write you as to what happened and asked the bill be sent to Star Furniture Manufacturing Company.

*Problem:* As the adjustment manager at Star, write Mr. Morgan. According to your reply letter from Montgomery dampness creped in under the vinyl and made the tops bulge. Montgomery agreed to press out the tables next week.

*Allied sales talk:* Besides suggesting that Trinity might like to have more tables as the church expands, also suggest consideration of matching bookcases. A four-shelf bookcase (46" high and 29" wide) can be delivered at a cost of \$20.45. *Action:* Suggest he indorse the bottom of your letter if he wants matching bookcases.

6. As requested, you will make over fifteen heavy-duty duck shower curtains (extra large—38" x 80") for Miss Louise Brooks, The Independent House, Knoxville, Tennessee. The new curtains should fit the Sanymetal shower stalls in her residence hall for women. As James E. Marshall, Marshall Awning Company, Atlanta, Georgia, you wrote the company where you bought this mildew-proof material (The Sailing Company, St. Louis 19, Missouri) and sent a sample of the curtain you received from Miss Brooks. The Sailing Company wrote back and said the material had been defective and you would be furnished with new material. To keep this good customer, you will have the curtains made at your expense. The curtains should be on the way in two weeks.
7. *Claim from:* Mr. Frank B. Miller, 6135 Redwood Avenue, Sacramento, California. *To:* Sunshine Corporation, 12238 West 8th Street, Los Angeles 17, California. *Adjustment asked for:* Repair head of shaver. Won't cut evenly. He used Sharpening Compound, but didn't help. He oiled shaver, but that didn't help. One-year guarantee is up next month. *Adjustment:* You will repair the head. Oiling (as indicated in the instruction book) is not good for the shaver. Suggest he use Pre-Lec shaving lotion for a more even shave.
8. *Claim from:* Mrs. J. A. Thornberry, 2032 Parkway, Denver, Colorado. *To:* Spencer Company, Lincoln, Nebraska (mail-order specialty house). *Adjustment asked for:* Replace heavy plastic ice bucket (\$10.25). Bucket arrived with hole in it. Gold trim damaged. Top wouldn't stay on because it was bent. *Adjustment:* Ask her to sign the enclosed damage-notification form. Ask her to send damaged ice bucket to you. New one will be sent special delivery.
9. *Claim from:* Harold Schwartz, owner and operator, Schwartz Clothing Company, Iowa City, Iowa. *To:* Wholesale Company, Davenport, Iowa. *Adjustment asked for:* The five dozen cuff links made by Shook which he ordered were not sent. He returns three dozen button-cuff shirts and asks for three dozen Arnold Shirts with French cuffs. *Adjustment:* You were out of Shook cuff links when order came. You

have them and will send them now. You are sending Arnold shirts with French cuffs. They were marked wrong at the factory.

10. Mrs. Harry B. Crawford, 45 Apple Street, Cairo, Illinois, ordered from the Elgin American, Elgin, Illinois, a mother-of-pearl Elgin Carryall with the initials BER on the front. The Carryall is practical, for it has lipstick case, mirror, and cigarette case all in one. The price, as advertised in last month's *Vogue*, \$14.95, includes the charge for initials and shipping charges. This morning she writes you (the adjustment manager) that she got her Elgin Carryall (which she paid for by check) with the initials FEB and that she is sending it back; she wants it either fixed right or her money back. When you check her order you see that she is right, and the only explanation you can find is that Elgin has added new help in preparation for the Christmas rush. From now on, you will have one worker be responsible for checking the initials before the Carryalls are mailed. In two days the correct initials BER can be put on the case, and it can be mailed to her by the first of next week. Make the full adjustment and keep Mrs. Crawford pleased with the Carryall.
11. Send three new blown-glass water goblets, packed in large box with ample excelsior, to Miss June Scott, 11 Country Club Hills, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, from The Little Red House (a gift shop), 1190 Pedro Street, Tucson, Arizona. The gift shop will file claim to the post office, but Miss Scott will have to fill out claim blanks. (Each goblet retails for \$3.75.) Allied sales talk can be on matching glass plates, \$3 each. These six-inch plates can be used for salads or desserts.
12. As manager of claims department, Union Van Lines, 1095 Western Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois, you sent loss and damage forms to Mr. Paul Burnam, Deep Eddy Apartments, Frankfort, Kentucky. He reported scratches on mahogany desk, cherry chest, and walnut table. With the forms, he sent estimates from a local furniture repairman mounting to \$80. You're sending him his check. Write letter to accompany it.
13. Three-year-old grandson, Bobby Jernigan, Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is given a four-unit space toy (\$45) from his grandfather, Tom B. Jernigan, 1190 Ridge Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas. This complicated all-electric toy (capsule, control tower, launching pad, and rockets) came from your store, Linns, Kansas City, Missouri. Grandfather realizes that Bobby is too destructive for such a delicate space toy; so he sends it back the day after he gives it to Bobby. Examination shows that the space toy is in good shape and can be sold as new. Refund grandfather's money and suggest he order No. M-9087, heavy-steel, wind-up space toy. Cost is \$15.95. Name other educational toys that Bobby might enjoy.

14. Replace the pearl in the ring for Miss Susan Waller, 1908 Main Street, Ames, Iowa. You are adjustment manager, Powers Discount House, 710 Waterloo Street, Des Moines. *Case:* Ring bought two months ago. No guarantee. Pearl pealed. Owner said had worn ring in salt water (Panama City, Florida). Salt water does not hurt pearls, but ammonia or any solution with ammonia in it can be most destructive. The stone looks defective to you. *Allied sales:* Talk up Lady Melgin watches (waterproof, 17 jewels, sweep second, 10 k. yellow-rolled, gold-plate case).

### Special Good-Will Letters

1. To build and maintain good will, *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* (all with executive offices in New York) send reprints of articles to a wide variety of people. A letter always accompanies each mailing. As the director of educational activities, write the letter to accompany *Fortune's* annual directory of the 500 largest industrial corporations. The directory goes to teachers of business writing, counselors, deans, and directors of placement bureaus in about 2,000 colleges and universities in the United States. The directory appeared as a supplement in last month's issue. Besides names and titles of major officers in each company, it contains useful data concerning financial standing (capital issues, sales, return on investment, for example) and number of employees.
2. As director of educational activities for *Time* (see preceding case) write a letter to accompany a reprint of your recent article analyzing business conditions and titled, "The Soaring Sixties?" The mailing is to go to college teachers of marketing.
3. Assume now the role of sales manager for *Life* (see the two preceding cases) and write a letter to go along with your brochure, "How an Ad Comes to *Life*." It describes step by step how an ad promoting Craft's cheeses was developed, from its original suggested form to the finished four-color, full-page appearance in a recent issue. The mailing goes to college teachers of advertising.
4. For your Essox dealers (filling stations) prepare copy for a form letter to accompany a calorie counter. The counter is a handy pocket-sized rotating disc that enables anyone to keep accurate count of meals away from home as well as at home. Name and address of the local dealer are imprinted on the counter. The letter establishes the local dealer's identification in the signature. The dealer orders whatever number he needs for his local list. You have the counters and letters printed in large quantities and inserted in envelopes (at about half the actual cost). The dealer makes arrangements for addressing the envelopes. Though you want to include some resale on Essox products and service, your primary emphasis is on the convenience of the calorie counter.

5. Ernest Haverman, salesman for Hines Supply Company, Paris, Kentucky, sent \$8 and filled out an application blank for membership in the American Credit Club. Over the signature of Clinton Grover, President, American Credit Club Corporation, Box 1044, Chicago 7, welcome Haverman as a member. Enclose his American Credit Card (which is honored throughout Europe and the Western world) that's good for 12 months and resell him on the convenience in being a member—as well as the protection for income-tax purposes.
6. Assume that you are in the credit department of a department store you are familiar with and prepare a letter to charge customers who've not used their accounts for three months. Build the letter around sales-promotional material on seasonal goods. The obvious action sought is to get them back to the store. It will be a personalized letter.
7. Prepare a follow-up letter to be sent at the end of six months to those charge customers whose accounts are still unused (see preceding case).
8. Prepare a third letter for use at the end of eight months, as indicated in the preceding case.
9. Prepare a fourth letter for sending, one month later, to the people in the preceding case. Without suggesting poor merchandise or service, invite the customer's comments and suggestions.
10. Prepare a letter for inactive accounts for use shortly before one or more of the following special times, as your instructor directs: Valentine's Day, Easter, summer-vacation time, Independence Day, Labor Day, back-to-school time, Thanksgiving, Christmas, winter-vacation time.
11. As the credit sales manager of Tru-Fit, Inc., Racine, Wisconsin, manufacturers of men's underwear, take time out to write a short personal note to the many owners and managers of men's shops, department stores, and other outlets who discount or pay promptly within your 30-day terms, commending them for their efficiency, stressing the desirability of their account, and subtly reselling Tru-Fit men's wear. Let the sample you write to Mr. Horace Crown, Manager, The Men's Shop, 1423 Commonwealth Square, Providence, Rhode Island, serve as the guide for the letters you will write to others.
12. Write the letter that Mr. Crown in the preceding case might wisely send to his retail customers expressing appreciation for prompt payment (note that there is no discount here; also a much wider range of stock).
13. Assume you are the owner of any business you are familiar with and write a form message that could be sent to any credit customer a year

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after the account was entered on your books. Assume that the customer has promptly paid all obligations when due. The inside address and salutation would be filled in in each case.

14. At some point in your life you have been impressed with the attention given you by an employee of a firm. Perhaps it was a clerk who went out of the way to find something for you or who took special pains to see that you were fitted well or who made a special effort on a rush order. It might have been a reservations clerk for a railroad, airline, or steamship company. It might have been a hostess or a stewardess on a plane. Write a letter to the business, commending the employee. Recall the specific instance and be specific in telling why and how the employee gave you good service. Use the employee's name or describe the circumstances so exactly that there could be no mistaking who it was. Assume that you are writing the letter two or three days after the happy incident.
15. You are president of your professional fraternity. Mr. Whitney Echols, an outstanding man in the profession, has just driven over at his own expense from a nearby city and talked to your group on a professional topic. Write a thank-you to Mr. Echols that is specific enough to assure him that you and your group appreciate his generosity and realize something beneficial from his efforts.
16. You have just finished heading a campus drive collecting funds for crippled children. Write a note to one of your divisional chairmen that will serve as a guide for all the others you'll send. It should express gratitude and congratulations for the good job done as well as resell the cause.
17. Write a letter of congratulations to someone you know who has been honored, who has accomplished something outstanding, who has been promoted, or something akin to these. Include enough specific comment about the event or deed to show your realization of its significance.
18. As head of a public library in a city of between 50,000 and 100,000 population, write the letter you would send welcoming newcomers to the community and extending your services. The letter should resell the community and the library. Assume the enclosure of a small map of the city which conveniently folds to pocket or purse size. The letter will be personalized with inside address and salutation and mailed as you receive names and addresses from the local credit bureau.
19. As librarian at your school, write a form letter with the salutation "Dear Colleague" to go to all faculty members, inviting them to see the one showing of a special film that you'll have a week from Sunday at 3:00 P.M. in the Reference Room. It is a color film, 80 minutes long, showing many details of the U.S. Library of Congress. The title

is simply "The Library of Congress." Reginald McDavid, Congressional Librarian and poet of renown, describes many of the services of the Library. Even grammar-school youngsters might enjoy the interior shots—especially those showing the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and other priceless documents.

20. Assume that you are the owner of any business you are familiar with. Write a note expressing appreciation for business given you by your customers. It will be an obvious form letter. Adapt your message seasonally as indicated by the assumed date of your letter.
21. Select some school, civic, or professional group of which you are or have been a member (or would like to be). As president, write a letter to members explaining why the dues are being raised. Explain the increase in terms of additional goals of the organization.
22. You are president of Prosser and Gambol, Cincinnati, Ohio, soap manufacturers. To tell your stockholders about the promotion your company has been giving the new deodorant and beauty soap, Buoyant, you are sending a form letter to them. During the rest of the year you plan to promote Buoyant with a million-dollar television advertising budget. Findly-Edgely, whose news program has become a household institution throughout the country, went on the air for Buoyant a month ago under a long-term contract. The board of directors feel that concentrated television programs are better than expensive soap samples distributed to homes. Buoyant has proved itself worthy of all-out promotion, and the sales power of Findly-Edgely with American consumers is well known. In addition to having a considerable impact on Buoyant sales, sponsorship of these programs is certain to enhance the prestige of the company and the remainder of the product line. Write this letter designed to win stockholder approval and plug Buoyant and the company behind it.
23. As assistant sales analyst for Simon, Inc., New York 16, N.Y., you write letters aimed to get customer reaction to how store personnel handle adjustments. Today's letter goes to Mrs. Emmett Smith, 134 Brennan Road, Brewstead, Long Island, who returned a Daiglon 100 per cent orlon sweater, \$12.95, size 36, and a pure silk Shameer blouse, \$15.95, size 38. You want to find out whether she was served promptly and courteously, whether the adjustment was satisfactory, and whether the salesperson helped her select other merchandise, as well as to invite any other comments or suggestions she wishes to make. You are enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope for her convenience. The objective of the letter is, of course, to build good will by stressing service attitude.
24. Write an obvious form letter to go to housewives encouraging the purchase of Sperry's handy half-gallon milk carton, which is not a

single carton, but an entirely new package that is really two quart cartons together with a handy carrying handle. Cost is a penny less than two individual quarts. Has no wax to mess up table or refrigerator. Plastic sides are absolutely leakproof. Twist of the wrist separates the handy half into two individual quarts. Special foil-sealed corner opens easily and pours like a pitcher without spilling a drop. Encourage the reader to order the handy half for home delivery and pick it up whenever she shops at her grocer's.

### Refusals

1. A recent Riplinger *Washington News Letter* contained this entry: "Put Color into Your Fires! Write the Director, Extension Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, for a free copy of 'Colors in the Fireplace.' It tells how to treat pine cones, kindling, chips, etc. to make fires burn more brightly." Requests poured in and you no longer have any copies. As director, prepare a letter that informs the numerous requesting individuals that your supply is exhausted and, because the Government Printing Office has so many printings already scheduled, it will be two months before any additional copies are available. Name is being put on mailing list and copy will be forwarded as soon as available. No need to write again.
2. *From:* Direct Advertising Association, Detroit 1, Michigan. *To:* You, a professor of advanced sales writing, your school. *Case:* You asked DAA for the direct-mail campaigns that won awards during the last five years. The usual fee for the current year's campaign is \$50. You have no fund to take care of such a fee. You would like these campaigns for two months and you will be glad to pay the postage on them both ways. *Refusal:* DAA gets requests like this all the time and formed a policy that all institutions, all individuals who want the campaigns must pay for them. There is no educator's special rate. Suggest that the professor can raise the money to cover the fee.
3. Your enthusiastic acceptance letter to Mr. Sanderson out of the way (case 7, p. 323) and in your pocket for mailing, you went out to lunch and ran into a former college mate who is province director for a similar organization, Delta Sigma Xi. No sooner were the two of you seated than he began to tell you of the trials and tribulations of his fraternal duties. You listened attentively, making mental notes and already beginning to phrase the polite refusal which—back in the office now—you are going to send Mr. Sanderson (just as soon as you tear to bits the original and the carbon of the "Yes" letter you almost sent).
4. *From:* Educational Testing Service, Cooperative Test Division, Princeton, New Jersey. *To:* You, a student, at your university. *Case:* In a letter to the testing service you asked for a copy of the specimen

set of tests on listening, comprehension, and reading. You read about these tests in one of your textbooks (J. H. Hooks, *Principles of High-School Teaching*). *Refusal:* These tests are just for teachers' use. They can not be sent to students. Many of the questions in the specimen tests are used on college board and secondary admissions tests.

5. *From:* Anthony Hull, Faroy, Inc., Houston, Texas (designer and manufacturer of unusual and expensive candles). *To:* Old Quality Gift Shoppe, University Avenue, Austin, Texas. *Case:* You are refusing to demonstrate your unusual candles (in shapes of animals, birds, flowers, etc.). You have been asked by so many groups to talk and demonstrate candle making at your own expense that you have had to insist that you be paid not only for your traveling expenses, but also a lecture fee of \$100. Many groups have charged fifty cents admission and have been able to raise the lecture and traveling fee this way.
6. Work at Tempo, Inc., Book Division, New York 6, New York, has piled up for the last month for you as publisher. You just got back from a six-week trip in Europe. You have to fly to South America in two weeks to make another talk; so talking to the Direct Mail Association at the Sherman House in Chicago next month will be out.
7. As Edward M. Burrow, director of the United States Information Agency, Washington 21, D.C., you have to refuse the invitation of the chairman of the graduation exercises of Ohio State University, Columbus. At the time he asked you to speak you will be on an important diplomatic mission for the United States. (Add any details you think are plausible and important.)
8. Unlike the Historical Society of Chicago, Illinois, you feel that the ugly old water tower should be torn down. It is inconsistent looking with the modern buildings around it. It takes up valuable space. It serves no purpose. Because of your feelings, you are not sending any money for this "Save the Water Tower" campaign. Instead of just ignoring the situation, you feel that you, as a major business executive, should put your refusal in writing.
9. *From:* Personnel Manager, United Bag and Paper Company, Savannah 8, Georgia. *To:* Hal P. Anderson, Box 9, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. *Case:* Anderson is an engineering student seeking employment at the end of this school term, when he graduates. Like dozens of other candidates, he's a good enough young man whom someone will like and offer employment to; he simply doesn't measure up to the men you were fortunate enough to be able to choose. Make plausible assumptions about his background and training that you'd be able to get from a personnel form record which Anderson filled in.

10. As managing editor of *Teenager*, you encourage your many subscribers to send in articles relating to everyday living. Naturally, you get much material you can't use. Since such offerings come from your subscribers, you need to exercise considerable tact in telling them that they didn't make the grade this time. Prepare a short acknowledgment form that will be individually typed enabling an assistant to type in the inside address and salutation with the teenager's first name.
11. As editor-in-chief of the most scholarly magazine in your major field, assume that one of your professors has submitted an article for publication. It's good—but not good enough. Two of the three review editors you get to read all articles have turned thumbs down on it, and you agree. Return the article and tell why. You may have several reasons or just one big one. But the trouble can't be just some specific little details. An editor nearly always has to correct some such things. (To make your letter specific, you might write it about a bad article you've read recently.)

### Acknowledging Incomplete Orders

1. *To:* Mrs. R. D. Wisdom, Box 419, Deming, New Mexico. *From:* Riegel's, Chicago mail-order outlet. *Order:*

1 No. 56 V 8976 All dacron zipper jacket in light green, medium size .....	\$10.95
2 No. 45 V 0987 Workmaster cotton coveralls in gray (@ \$4.40 .....	8.80
2 No. 40 V 754 wool dacron slacks, 32-inch waist measure, (@ 8.98 .....	17.96
	\$37.71
Shipping charges add 95¢ .....	.95

Money order accompanied the order ..... \$38.66

*Case:* You need to know the chest measurement (sizes 34, 36, 40, 44, 46) of this Workmaster cotton coverall. It has six pockets, rule pocket, hammer strap, and side openings. The slacks come in dark brown, slate gray, or denim blue. They are 40 per cent wool, 60 per cent dacron, with snugtex waistband. Get information from Mrs. Wisdom. You could send jacket now, but to save shipping costs, will send with coveralls and slacks.

2. *To:* Mr. R. D. Wise, Stuckey's Furniture Company, 490 Madison Avenue, New York 16, N.Y. *Initial order:* shipment freight charges collect and billed on credit terms of 2/10, n/30:

24 No. 54 M 467 Rugs, 24" x 42", Lockweave Viscalon in red, yellow, green, @ \$8.00.

12 No. 89 M 478 Rugs 9' x 12', Cordaweave Viscalon, @ \$70.00.

*Case:* Mr. Wise's order failed to tell you what color Cordaweave Viscalon he wanted. The Cordaweaves come in solid colors and also flecked with black and white. Many customers are buying the plain

color for living rooms and matching the dining room or hall with flecked pattern. You can send the 24" x 42" rugs today, but to save freight charges, you'll wait and send all rugs in one shipment. *Resale on rugs:* Advertised in *House Lovely* and *Life* magazines. Have handsome ripple texture that hides soil, foot, and scuff marks. Can be pieced, recut, and relaid without binding.

3. *From:* Kate Greenway Mills, Danforth, Virginia. *To:* A new customer, Linn's Department Store, Wheeling, West Virginia. *Case:* Linn's ordered 4 dozen No. 980 James Kenrob sweaters and 4 dozen No. 987 James Kenrob matching skirts. Specified one dozen each in grass green, royal red, sky blue, and carmel yellow. No sizes were mentioned for the skirts or sweaters. These handsome sweaters and skirts retail for \$14.95 each, wholesale, \$11.25. A check for the correct amount including shipping charges was enclosed. Invite credit application.
4. *From:* The Audio House, 198 Commerce Street, Jacksonville, Florida. *To:* William McMillen, 937 West Jefferson Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida. *Case:* When Mr. McMillen was in your shop he selected a twin-speaker portable stereo Garrard phonograph, Proxylin-coated plastic-covered case, for \$25.95, to be shipped to his home address. He gave the store his personal check for \$30.93 (including shipping charges of \$4.20 and 78¢ sales tax). As soon as he returned home he dropped you a note saying that he had changed his mind and wanted the completely automatic player at \$59.95 that he had talked about while in The Audio House. The completely automatic, deluxe four-speed stereo portable with the Garrard changer costs \$69.95. This more expensive set with eight-inch speakers instead of four-inch speakers weighs 30 pounds instead of 13 pounds (the weight of the less expensive model). Shipping charges would be \$4 more and sales tax \$1.32 more. The \$25.95 model comes in blue or tan, while the \$69.95 model comes in slate, charcoal gray, gray, or brown. Find out which color he wants. And clear up the money details.
5. *From:* Rosenberger's Trunk Factory, Des Moines 7, Iowa. *To:* Mr. Joel M. Snow, First National Bank Building, Oskaloosa, Iowa. *Case:* From your recent catalogue, Mr. Snow ordered a Rexbilt brief case 19 B Slim case at \$28.95. You do not have a case at that price nor do you have a case listed at that number. Your 18 A, 18" Slim attache case with removable three-pocket file is priced at \$24.95 plus \$2.50 tax. You also have the 18 B, 16" three-way portfolio with handles at \$22.95 plus \$2.30 tax. Both are made from top-grain cowhide to the specifications of the National Luggage Dealers Association. He may select these cases in suntan, ginger, or black top-grain cowhide. You'll charge this case to Mr. Snow's account. You can talk up your new, light-weight Lark luggage, made with sturdy magnesium frames, soft sides, and individual pockets for accessories. Men's 44" suiter holds

three suits, six shirts, all accessories, yet weighs under 30 pounds when full packed. It is priced at \$60.00 plus \$6 tax.

6. Write the copy for a postcard, vague-order acknowledgment for Dale's, Inc., Walden, Massachusetts. Leave space to ask the customers for the specific information you need to fill the order satisfactorily. This is an obvious form message.

### Back-Order Acknowledgments

1. Prepare the copy for a regular-size postcard acknowledging an order received by Dale's Inc., Walden, Massachusetts. It should be worded to apply to any of Dale's hundreds of specialty products sold by mail at \$2 to \$15. The purpose of the postcard message is to inform the reader that delivery will be delayed. Plan for a blank after the signature block that enables a clerk in the order department to hand-write or typewrite the specific article and quantity ordered. Although this is an obvious form ("Dear Customer" is an appropriate salutation), it can be phrased positively in readable, lively style.
2. T and M Drug Store, 911 Oak Street, Warsaw 4, Indiana, ordered three dozen Proxodent electric toothbrushes from Quibb Incorporated, Detroit 6, Michigan, to be shipped subject to regular credit terms of 2/10, n/30. Any number of people can use the Proxodent, but Quibb includes four different colored brushes with the purchase of one Proxodent. In about 15 days Quibb will have enough blue brushes to complete T and M's order. The production department doubled up on the yellow brushes but produced no blue ones. *Resale talk:* Proxodent was tested for four years in dental clinics. Its power unit is completely enclosed in epoxy resin and sealed against moisture of any kind. The power unit oscillates the brush gently up and down 60 times a second to dislodge food particles. It helps keep teeth glistening, refreshes gums, and leaves the mouth feeling clean. The druggist buys a Proxodent (with four brushes) for \$12.95 and sells for \$19.75. Replacement brushes are 70 cents to druggist, 98 cents retail.
3. *To:* Crossroads Service Station, Flagstaff, Arizona, J. C. Clement, Owner. *From:* Kelly's Automotive Supplies, Inc., 14326 Sepulveda Avenue, Los Angeles 48. Back-order the 24 Repair-N-Aires Mr. Clement ordered from you as a result of your ad in *Automotive News*. Unit is \$3.50 wholesale; retail price, \$4.98. Repair-N-Aire seals punctures and inflates the tire in one quick, simple operation. Driver just attaches aerosol cylinder to any tire valve. Sealant stops leak and inflating action starts immediately. Car is road-ready in two minutes. No tools or jacking-up needed. Can easily be kept in glove compartment. Refills available at \$12 a dozen (retail price, \$2.98). Reason for back-order: supplier of cylinders has emergency government orders that must be filled before resuming production of cylinders. You can promise delivery in about one month.

4. *To:* Miss Susan Burach, 2164 Dorchester Avenue, Chicago 39. *From:* Sunshine House, 1193 Sunshine Building, Beverley Hills, California. Product: Easy-grip, all steel hand embosser that makes expensive looking, raised letter impressions of three-line name and address on any kind of letter paper and envelope. Easy, inexpensive way to have personalized stationery for only \$5.95. You can assure her of delivery in two to three weeks. Backlog of orders.
5. *To:* Miller Construction Company, Box 3441, Jacksonville, Florida. *From:* Edward Wayne and Co., 2119 Waycross Road, Atlanta. As sales manager, acknowledge Miller's initial order for a dozen reams of NCR (no-carbon-required) paper @ \$6 a ream. The paper will have to be back-ordered two to three weeks, according to the latest word from the manufacturer. *Resale:* Excellent for all kinds of forms. No need to waste space to provide gripping area for removing interleaved carbons; information can be printed to the edge of sheets when space is critical. Certainly use of NCR is less bothersome than using carbon sheets.
6. *From:* Lee Custom Engineering, 6026 North Blossom Lane, Milwaukee 17, Wisconsin. *To:* Appleton Hardware Company, P.O. Box 143, Appleton, Wisconsin. Back-order the two cartons (dozen boxes to a carton, each self-storing box containing complete set of tools including powder and shot measures, decapper, capper, wadding tool, resizer, crimper, and instructions for effective use) of Lee Loaders, one dozen for 12 gauge @ \$90, one dozen for 20 gauge @ \$72. These help hunters reduce expenditures for shells by enabling them to reload shotgun shells. It wads, resizes, and crimps in one continuous operation. Is guaranteed never to wear out or break through normal use; if any part should ever fail, it will be replaced at no cost. Loads anywhere. Can be carried in hunter's pocket. Usual retail price: \$11.95 for 12 gauge, \$9.95 for 20 gauge. You have to back-order for two weeks because you've had unseasonable demand but are increasing production to handle all the orders now on the books.
7. You are the owner and manager of Bakery Specialties, 2617 Carondelet Avenue, New Orleans. Write Mrs. C. Byron Ferris, 10 Magnolia Drive, Jackson, Mississippi. She ordered six 2-pound struessel cake rings @ \$3 to be sent direct and paid for by her \$18 check. These cake rings come packed in attractive metal containers, are shipped anywhere (shipping charges included in the price), delivery and satisfaction guaranteed. You are at present out of the metal containers. According to a back-order received from your supplier earlier in the week, you should have an ample supply in two weeks. Mrs. Ferris should have her cake rings in three weeks. Write the appropriate letter to convince her that they are appropriate for any season and well worth waiting for.

### Diverting Orders

1. *To:* Mrs. J. P. Whigham, 19 Pinehurst, Pineapple, Minnesota. *From:* Rupperware, Inc., Buffalo 12, New York. *Facts:* Mrs. Whigham sent her personal check for \$9.95 (including \$1 for shipping charges) with the request that you send her the set of four Rupperware air-tight plastic refrigerator dishes as advertised in this month's *Woman's Home Journal*, since she can find none locally. Your ad did read "\$8.95. Available at your local dealer." And you do not have a dealer in Pineapple. Her nearest Rupperware dealer is M. P. Yearling and Company, 976 Second Avenue, St. Cloud. Under your exclusive-dealership contract, you cannot sell direct to any customer; and you must so inform the lady. You are sending her order and check to Yearling; she should hear in a week or ten days. (In addition to the usual benefits of your marketing arrangement, is there any other advantage you can point out to her?)
2. Now shift roles and write the letter that Yearling would send to Mrs. Whigham upon sending her the set of Rupperware described in the preceding case. (True, this is a modified standard acknowledgment, but it is part of the desirable procedure in diverting an order to a dealer.)
3. *From:* Ramey Manufacturing Co., Paterson, New Jersey. *To:* Mr. A. G. Cosgrove, 1214 Chapeco Way, Norman, Oklahoma. *Facts:* Mr. Cosgrove read your ad for Ramey tricot shirts in *Playboy* and sent an order direct because he could not find them in Norman or near-by Oklahoma City. Ramey tricot shirts cost \$12.95 but are a real boon to the traveling man. No ironing after being sudsed, rinsed, and hung up to drip dry. Your ad did specify retail price. And you could send the two shirts he requested COD if you sold direct. You don't, however; you distribute Ramey shirts exclusively through authorized dealers. Ask him to order his Ramey shirts through Neiman-Barcus Men's Shop in Dallas.
4. In response to your dealer ad in *Hardware Journal* for locking plier wrenches (6-inch, \$18 a dozen; 8-inch, \$21 a dozen; 10-inch, \$24 a dozen), Mr. John C. Stewart, plumber, of Conway, Arkansas, sends you (Precision Tools, Inc., Chicago) an order with check for one of each at wholesale-quantity order prices and includes \$1 for handling and shipping. Ask the plumber to direct his order to L. B. Long & Co. in Little Rock.
5. As sales manager for National Dietary Foods Co., Detroit, acknowledge the order of Sam B. Davis, Chattahoochee, Georgia (owner of Davis Grocery), for six cases of Netrecal (one can is a balanced 220-calorie meal; served chilled or hot, it eliminates the pains of dieting and of meal preparation for dieters). He asked that it be shipped direct, shipping charges collect, and attached his check for the cor-

rect amount at your jobbers' prices. You certainly want him to stock Netrecal. But you have to return his check and ask him to order through the Weatherford Wholesale Grocery Co. in Atlanta. Review the reasons why such an arrangement is advantageous to retailers before asking him to order from a nearby source and pay slightly more per case.

### Suggesting Substitutes

1. You are assistant manager of Bloomberg & Co., 127 Twentieth Street, Birmingham 3, Alabama, answering the request of Mrs. Jon M. Young, Box 145, Columbiana, Alabama, that you charge to her account and send a Maisonette card table like the one she bought from you last year for about \$12. The top was 30 inches square and the height was 26 inches. You no longer handle this brand or this size. Most people prefer the table measuring 34 inches square and standing 28-inch. (As a matter of fact, the Maisonette she bought with painted legs and vinyl top was a close-out item.) You now handle the Holcomb, with alloy unpainted legs and trim and top of hard cellulose. Definitely a better buy at \$16.95. Less likely to nick. Much less possibility of tearing the top covering and/or of glasses leaving water stains; greater resistance to cigarette scorch. Sturdier. Easier snap-in legs for unfolding; no hinges, bolts, screws. Try to get the lady to agree to a substitute. The legs and trim are golden colored. The cellulose top she can have in white, green, or brown. Matching chairs are available at \$8.95 each.
2. *Write:* Edna Stembridge, 15 Hayworth Drive, Beaumont, Texas. *From:* King Household Gift Shop, 1978, Charles Street, Houston 6. *Facts:* Mrs. Stembridge ordered a set of Tyrex mixing, storage bowls, @ \$6.95, to be charged to her account and sent as a wedding gift to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Carpenter, 19864 University Avenue, Apartment B-1, New Orleans. Because Tyrex chips and breaks so easily, King's stocks Rupperwear exclusively—heavy-duty plastic, unbreakable, and does not chip. The three-piece set of square (rather than round, making for easier storage) bowls (1-quart, 1½-quart, and 3-quart) costs \$10. The jumbo 6-quart bowl for salads or the cake box she can get for \$5.95. All Rupperwear pieces have air-tight lids. Salads can be prepared the day before and still be as fresh as if they were just made. Pipe tobacco stays delightfully and fragrantly fresh for months in any Rupperwear piece. You'll be glad to gift-wrap and mail to the Carpenters whatever Rupperwear Mrs. Stembridge selects as soon as she lets you know her choice.
3. Mr. Harold Wilson, Jr., 1910 Reed Avenue, Topeka, Kansas (whose account in his and his wife's name has been on your books for ten years), ordered from G. S. Hall & Co., Spanish Plaza, Kansas City, one pair of white 6-button Krislav kid gloves (he did not specify price, but these retail at \$24.95) and one pair of white 3-button Krislav kid gloves (retail price \$18.95), both in size 7, to be gift-

wrapped and mailed to his office address, 710 Topeka National Bank Building, and charged to his account. Krislavs are the finest in French imported gloves. But because you have found that the French kid glove, Lavette, sold better than the Krislav, you now carry only the Lavette. Lavettes have probably sold better than Krislavs because they are less expensive (\$18.95 for 6-button, \$14.95 for 3-button) but equally long-wearing, luxurious, and beautiful—and they wash much more satisfactorily. Ask if you may send the Lavette gloves and also a box of Lavette cold soap (six packages to a box; one package will wash one pair of gloves) @ \$1.50. Make action easy for the gentleman. To which address will you write him?

4. *To:* Mrs. Jonothan E. Davis, Cold Soil Road, Rutherford, New Jersey. *From:* The Linen Shop, New Kensington Road, Elizabeth, New Jersey. *Facts:* Mrs. Davis ordered twin spreads, 260 T 798, with Donald Duck design (multi-color on beige, 72 x 102, \$15 each) charged to her account. She must have ordered from an old catalog because you replaced the Donald Duck items with Pogi the Bear over a year ago. Pogi spreads, drapes, and towels have had the same kind of appeal for children that the TV character has had. Spreads are of long-wearing, pre-shrunk cotton sailcloth. They are washable and need only touch-up ironing to look fresh and bright again. They are tailored with pleated split corners for custom-fit look. Complementary drapes are available at \$9.95 a pair (260 T 362). Shall you suggest a Pogi Bear lamp? 19½" high. The base is a bear and the shade has three bears pictured on it. \$10. 260 T 652. Mail an order blank and reply envelope so that she can authorize you to send the Pogi Bear spreads, and the drapes and the lamp if she wants them.
5. *To:* Lt. Leon Black, APO 970, New York. *From:* City Drug Store, 198 Scranton Avenue, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. *Facts:* Lt. Black wrote back to his hometown drug store asking that someone send him a Ray-beam electric razor that will work on AC or DC. The Ray-beam he bought from City a year ago will not work on DC. He is subject to move into rural country. Although you have a razor that works on either AC or DC and that sells for \$19.50, suggest the usefulness of your newest battery-operated razor, the Sorelco Sportsman, \$22.50. The self-contained unit runs on two "D"-cell flashlight batteries. Precision made in Holland—lightweight and compact. It has the famous Sorelco twin heads with self-sharpening rotary action blades. Head flips open for easy cleaning. Make it easy for Black to reply. You'll bill him after learning what shipping charges will be.
6. As sales manager for the Hudson Mail Order Store, 110 North Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois, answer Mrs. J. H. Pennington, 111 South Walnut Street, Pekin, Illinois. She wants a Magna-Vetic steam iron, \$12.95, like her friend and neighbor got from Hudson several years ago. You used to carry the Magna-Vetic, a \$12, 4-pound steam iron (not a dry iron), but 6 months ago you found a new and im-

proved iron, the Strip-O-Matic. It weighs less than many women's purses, only  $3\frac{1}{4}$  pounds, and has a larger soleplate—more than 30 square inches (covers wider ironing area in fewer strokes). Fabric dial gives perfect heat for whatever fabric you're ironing, which means no more scorching. Although it's \$14.95, you can use it as a steam iron or as a dry iron. When you use it as a steam iron, you don't need to sprinkle anything except heavy cottons, linens, and starched fabrics. The steady flow of steam moistens fabrics, saves you the time and work of sprinkling and of ironing premoistened clothes. You get instant steam. Drop by drop water falls onto the hot soleplate and flashes instantly to steam. Steam stops automatically when iron is placed on heel rest. Use tap water in all but extremely hard-water areas. You can press suits, skirts, and sweaters without a damp pressing cloth. Saves money on pressing bills. Write Mrs. Pennington that you can send her Strip-O-Matic within three days after you receive her order. She can send a check with the enclosed order blank; or if she prefers, you can send it COD.

## Combinations

1. *Write from:* Smith and Cross, shoe wholesalers, St. Louis 8, Missouri. *Write to:* Hamman's Bootery, Plaza Shopping Center, Muskogee, Oklahoma. The order is signed by J. P. Hamman, owner. A check for \$207.67 accompanies the order. The calculations of shipping weights and charges are correct, but the catalog number for the boots, with rubber reinforcements at toes, heels, and insteps, is not correct and the wool-lined zip slippers (J36267) are out of stock.

12 prs. No. J36267, Wool-lined zip slippers, D width, men's sizes 9, 10, 11, 12 @ \$4.00 (Brown) .....	\$ 48.00
12 prs. No. J36248, Glove-leather slip-on, men's sizes 9, 10, 11, 12 @ \$3.00 (Tan) .....	36.00
12 prs. No. C459, boots, men's sizes 9, 10, 11, 12, medium width (D) @ \$10.00 .....	120.00
	\$204.00
Shipping charges \$3.67 .....	3.67
	\$207.67

*Find out* whether he wants boot No. J46987 at \$12 or No. J46999 at \$14 and what color (tan or black). Both boots are insulated. The \$14 pair has double tanned-leather outside and inner lining of glove leather. The \$12 pair is made of elk leather outside and lined with cotton fleece. The more expensive pair has Ensolite foam insulation which keeps body heat in and cold out.

Because of their popularity the wool-lined zip slippers have been back-ordered. *Money details:* You expect a shipment next week. Hold Mr. Hamman's check until you hear from him. Send him a credit application blank and financial-statement form for him to fill out and return. *Sales talk on house:* Establish the profitability of your shoes (50 per cent markup) and talk concretely about the dealer aids you furnish: quarter-page ads in *Play Man*, counter displays, and en-

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velope stuffers (which you'll furnish at request). *Allied sales:* Shearing slip-ons have hug-tight orlon knit cuffs. They have simulated leather sole, come in gray or black, and sell for \$3.

2. *To:* Mrs. Beaton Davis, an old customer and owner-manager of Quality Shoppe, 1293 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida. *From:* Mary Case, Inc., North Philadelphia. *Facts:* The Mary Case Chestnut perfume has been discontinued and in its place is a superior, longer-lasting fragrance perfume, called Evening Glow. The price for the 1-oz. bottle is the same—\$3.50 each, but she can take at least a 20 per cent markup. The formula for this perfume was worked out in your Paris laboratories. Dealers have had excellent sales return with this new perfume. Production of the new Mary Case Jasmine Skin Lotion (\$1.50 each) has been behind because special scents to make the Jasmine fragrance have been held up. You hope to be back in production next week, but it will be three weeks before the lotion will be moving from Pennsylvania to Florida. Customers prefer the Jasmine to many of the other scents. Assure Mrs. Davis that as soon as you have 3 dozen 10-oz. bottles (the amount she ordered) you'll move them on to her. She is a regular charge customer of many years standing.
3. *To:* L. Aaron Christian, Manager, Canty's (a men's store), Ann Arbor, Michigan. *From:* L. A. Sparling Company, Bronson, Michigan, suppliers of racks and displays for men's shops. *Case:* New 18" × 36" shirt display rack with mirror-chrome finish for counters and windows has to be back-ordered. It displays three shirts. There has been a strike at the chrome supplier's plant. Probably Sparling can deliver in two weeks. You (production manager of Sparling) talked with the chrome supplier today and got assurance that production will pick up soon. The R6-3R double-bar rack, \$122.65, has been replaced by a superior reinforced double-bar rack, \$124.50. The reinforced rack has weighted base so that it will not tip. *Action:* Write the necessary letter to assure Mr. Christian that the \$12.24 shirt display will be on its way as soon as you can possibly get it to him and also assure him that the new improved bar rack is an economy in the long run. Mr. Christian is an established customer of yours. He requests the usual credit terms of 2/10, n/30, freight charges collect.
4. *To:* P. M. Liddy, owner-manager, The Pro Shop, Gainesville Country Club, Gainesville, Florida. *From:* MacDrogin Company, New Haven, Connecticut. *Case:* You'll have to back-order the 2 dozen each of #1, 2, 3, and 4 wood (@ \$12.50) he ordered. You are holding off for some top-grain persimmon for the heads. For the putter he ordered find out if he wants the MacDrogin putter with the special pencil shaft with select-quality leather grip, or the polished brass putter with the center-shafted head. Both putters are the same price (\$15) and both are for the right or left hand. The 2 dozen oval-style golf bags with two pockets and hood in red and black plaid and Aztec tan

trim you are sending. They will be billed at \$12 each, subject to the usual 2/10, n/30 terms you approved for Liddy several years ago.

5. In the preceding case assume that Mr. Liddy did not specify which style golf bags he wanted. He may choose from 14-club vinyl plastic (black with gray), \$18; 21-club heavy cotton hoseduck (tan with natural trim), \$22.50 (extra-large double-zipper ball pocket, zippered clothing pocket); 18-club vinyl plastic (red with black) with two pockets and hood, \$20.
6. Instead of the preceding, assume that you are shipping the MacDrogin #1, 2, 3, and 4 woods. Write the letter.
7. *From:* Petersburg Hardware Company, Norfolk, Virginia. As sales manager handle the initial order from Mr. Jerome Webster, a retailer in Wilmington, North Carolina (198 Fayette Street), for the following:

12	41-016 My Buddy tackle boxes @ \$3.50 .....	\$ 42.00
24	41-004 Falls City minnow bucket @ \$4.50 .....	108.00
12	41-010 South Bend casting rod, 5' green glass shaft, Specie cork handle @ \$12 .....	144.00
		<u>\$294.00</u>

Mr. Webster's check covered shipping charges. Mr. T. M. Fox, your salesman, says Webster is hardworking, has a good location, and therefore should be a good customer. He sells to quality clientele. Today you are sending the tackle boxes and minnow buckets, but you don't have any South Bend casting rods with cork handles and won't have any for a month. You don't stock many of them any more because heavy demand has shifted to spin-cast rods—slightly longer, lighter, with bigger line guides. You can send him 41-006 South Bend spin-cast rod, 6-foot glass shaft, with master grip handle, inverted ferrule, for only \$9.50. Find out if he would rather wait for No. 41-010 or whether he wants you to send 41-006. Tell Mr. Webster about an allied product such as No. 41-008 Pflueger supreme spin-cast reels (automatic push-button free spool that gives extra-long casts. Star wheel drag gives smooth, slow takeup. Naugahyde reel case, \$25. Point out that usual markup is 50 per cent).

8. *From:* The Linen Shop, 187 Pecos Avenue, Houston, Texas. *To:* Mrs. Victor Rice, 408 Sunset Avenue, Baton Rouge. *Case:* Acknowledge the order for four St. Mary's acrilan blankets (two in butter yellow, 72 x 90 @ \$15.95; two in oyster white, 63 x 90 @ \$15.95); and two dozen combed percale sheets, twin-bed size @ \$14. Charge to her account. *Action:* Send the two blankets 72 x 90, but the two blankets (63 x 90) have to be back-ordered. Takes two weeks. Also find out if Mrs. Rice wants the combed percale sheets in fitted or flat style. Both styles have 190 threads per square inch after sizing. Flat sheets are finished with 4-inch hem at top, 1-inch hem at bottom; strong tape selvages add strength to sides. Fitted sheets, however, save time and work, are sanforized, and have tape-bound edges that resist strain.

9. *From:* Riegel's, Chicago mail-order outlet. *To:* Mrs. R. D. Wisdom, Box 4312, Deming, New Mexico. *Case:* She orders from an old catalog an outdated all-rayon zipper car coat (No. 89 V 5501, medium size, @ \$7.98) for her older son, and two Ban-Lon sweaters, size 14. She mentioned no color for either item. Also, you can substitute for \$10.95 a rugged poplin parka with zipped front in olive green, or an all-wool suburban coat in green, \$17.95. Sizes range from 8 to 20. The suburban coat has red quilt lining and must be dry cleaned. Justify the price increase with any sales points you can think of. She may select the sweaters in charcoal gray, azure blue, American red or copper-tone. *Action:* See which of the coats she wants (parka or the suburban coat). Have her select the color and the correct size for the classic pullover sweaters. Make action easy. You will charge the coat, sweaters, and mailing charge to her revolving account.
10. *From:* Madison Manufacturing Company, Columbus, Ohio. *To:* Steck's Book Store, 1411 West Grand Avenue, Dayton 4, Ohio. *Facts:* Steck ordered the following merchandise to be sent COD:
- 3 dozen black typewriter ribbons for Standard Remingwood, \$8.50.
  - 1 box (24) Park ball-point pens, \$15 a box.
  - 10 dozen boxes No. 2 Eagle lead drawing pencils, 6 to a box, in assorted colors, \$4 a dozen.
  - 1 gross Corona-brand typewriter cleaner sheets.
- Indefinite part:* Ribbons come in cotton (\$9 a dozen), silk (\$12), or nylon (\$10.50). Ask Steck to check the reply card for the information. You have no ribbon at \$8.50. *Back-order:* The Corona typewriter cleaner sheets (made by Wisconsin Mining and Manufacturing Company) are in process of manufacturing, and it will be 15 days before you can send them. The pens and pencils are on their way via parcel post (shipping and COD charges add \$1.24 to total charges). To save on COD and parcel-post fees, you'll send the ribbons when you ship the typewriter cleaner sheets—unless wanted immediately.
11. William Robinson, Colonel in the Army, AFSE, APO 510, orders from Edison's (retailers), 4298 Adams St., Washington 6, D.C., the following gifts to be sent to his brother, Robert, and niece, Sarah Benton, 3659 Brewster Avenue, Dearborn, Michigan:
- 1 Barker "41" convertible pen.
  - 1 Forham sterling serving knife, in the Longchamps pattern.
- To be certain that Sarah Benton will receive a serving knife that is not a duplicate of something she already has, ask the Colonel to specify whether he wants to send a cheese (\$8.50), pie (\$9.50), or cake server (\$10.50). Enclose a folder with pictures to help him choose. Because the sales were poor for the Barker "41," you discontinued it and in its place you have the new Barker VP (very-personal) pen, the only pen you can dial to suit your style. The writer dials the point to fit his writing angle. It's a perfect gift for people who are left-handed, and for people who take great pride in their penmanship. He has a choice of 15 gradations. The VP sells for \$12.50, just \$2

more than the "41." Send pictures of this pen and ask if you may substitute it for the "41." Ask if these are gifts for special occasions and if he'd like them gift-wrapped and sent with appropriate cards. Gift-wrapping will cost 25 cents per package, and there are shipping charges. The Colonel has had an account with you for several years.

12. You are one of the personal shoppers for Marshall Miller & Company, St. Louis, Missouri, handling the order of Mrs. Peter Adams, 22 Middleton Park, Trenton, Ontario, Canada, a good mail-order customer whose address has been carried on your books for five years as Scott Field, Illinois, where her husband was a captain in the Air Force. With the necessary change-of-address information, she also included a notation that Major Adams would be stationed in Canada for two years and she'd be calling on you for lots of shopping help. She enclosed two cards, asking that you send two weeks from now to her nephew, Master Johnnie Manning, 6260 Greenmere Drive, Dallas 26, Texas, one red Thermo-Jack Jacket, No. 1435, advertised in this month's *Miller Modes*, @ \$6, and one week later to her niece, Mary Susan Manning, same address, two yellow nylon plisse nightgowns, No. 2156, size 8, @ \$3. Both are birthday gifts, she says. Since Mrs. Adams fails to give the size of the boy's water-repellent jacket, ask her for the boy's size (and if she doesn't know, ask his age and, if she knows them, his chest measurement and arm length). This has been a popular choice for school youngsters: soft flannel lining; fabric treated to resist spots and stains; seal of approval of *Good Housekeeping*. Probably because the nightgowns wear well, need no ironing, and are easy to wash, you have sold almost all your stock and have none in size 8. And a month from now is the earliest the manufacturer will promise them to you. If Mrs. Adams would like to make another choice, you'll be glad to handle it for her. If she'd prefer, you can mail Mary Susan one of your special children's birthday-gift announcement cards, which will arrive for her birthday, telling her that she will receive a gift about a week later. It includes a blank for indicating the name of the donor. Word the message so that Mrs. Adams will give you the necessary information and agree to the delayed birthday gift.

### Refused Adjustments

1. *From:* General Western Electric Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. To Mr. H. H. Barlow, 189 Cormany Street, Battle Creek, Michigan, write an adjustment letter. *Case:* Barlow returns his two-week-old General Western transistor radio. In his letter he encloses the bill he paid for \$7, made out to Fix-it Shop, Battle Creek. He asks you to repair the transistor and pay the \$7 repair bill. You gladly check the transistor and find nothing wrong with it. You are returning the transistor radio to him. You must refuse to pay the repair bill since our guarantee clearly says "factory guaranteed." Suggest Barlow deal directly with you as the printed instructions said that accompanied the radio.

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2. *From:* White's Appliance Store, 1986 Broad Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. *To:* Mrs. M. C. McKeown, 1906 Commerce Street, Norman, Oklahoma. *Case:* Mrs. McKeown brought her new G.W. electric percolator to your store and asked you to fix it. You were out at the time, but she told ~~your~~ bookkeeper that she didn't have her guarantee or any bill to show that she got it from you. She expected it repaired and mailed to her this week, at no expense to her.

First you check for your store label because lately you have had trouble with a discount house in Oklahoma City. Because you get the discounter's dissatisfied customers, you put your own store label on all appliances. Also, you notice that it is last year's model, and it is defective. Write Mrs. McKeown and explain that your store did not sell her the percolator and that she should take it back to the outlet from which she bought it.

3. *From:* Service Department, General Eastern Manufacturing Company, Mineola, New York. *To:* Colonel Kelly B. Mock, Fort Knox, Kentucky. *Case:* Refuse to replace General Eastern dual-control electric blanket. The blanket was not washed according to directions. It has been squeezed and crushed so that some of the wires are broken. Also his guarantee time has expired (one year). You are returning the blanket.
4. *From:* Adjustment Department, Women's Specialty Shop, Chattanooga, Tennessee. *To:* Mrs. John P. Daffron, 198 Pine Street, Mount Eagle, Tennessee. *Case:* Mrs. Daffron bought a \$70 Paul Pome suit from you last September. It is now May. She writes and asks you to please alter the suit to her measurements (which she lists in her letter). You must refuse her on the basis that alterations are made at the time of purchase but not after three weeks from the date of purchase (providing the purchase came to \$50).
5. With the same setting in the preceding case, assume that Mrs. Daffron bought her suit on sale and she wants a free alteration two days later. The store policy is no free alterations on sale clothes, but if she would like she could come in and have the suit altered at your low alteration prices.
6. Sit in for Mr. C. W. Miller, adjustment manager, Peers and Loebuck Company, Chicago 5, Illinois. Refuse to pay the service charge asked for by P. L. Babcock, 1805 Bates Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.
- Facts in case:* Portable dishwasher (Model No. 587 64790) bought 18 months ago. One-year guarantee. Soap dispenser given trouble ever since Babcock has had machine. Three new ones installed during the one-year guarantee period. Babcock wants company to pay recent \$5 service charge and the \$3.75 charge for dispenser cup. Refuse on basis that guarantee has expired.
7. *From:* Philip B. Harris, Box J-245, University City, Pennsylvania, you get a claim letter asking that his camera be adjusted. He returned

camera and said pictures were poorly focused. The guarantee covered any defect of workmanship or materials within one year of normal use. The camera was purchased just three months ago. On examination, however, there is definite evidence that the camera has been dropped. There is a big dent on the right corner of the camera. Refuse to make the adjustment.

8. *From:* the Adjustment Department, Belk-Huron Department Store, Columbus, Ohio. *To:* Mrs. Dayton Richards, Route #5, Warsaw, Ohio. *Case:* Letter from Mrs. Richards reports that her son, Tommy, received two blue shirts from his aunt in Columbus two weeks ago. They do not fit. She wants two new ones in size 16, 33" sleeves, button cuffs. These shirts that she mailed back to you have been sold for some time. The box has dirt in it. The shirts are faded. You do not make exchanges after two weeks following purchase date—then only when the goods show no signs of use, wear, etc. She can wash them and Tommy can get many hours of enjoyment from wearing them. They are sanforized.
9. Refuse to pay the \$25 car-check-up fee asked for by John Stewart, 1907 Park Lane, Albany, New York. You are Martin O'Brian, Rochester, New York, Dash car dealer. *Case:* Stewart bought car from you one month ago. Car had coupons in back of book of instruction that were good for 1,000 mile check-up. Stewart should have used coupons for check-up by the other dealer. You will get no money from manufacturer of Dash to pay for 1,000 mile check-up twice.
10. Teenager Martha Williams, 1351 Waverly Place, Arlington, Virginia, charged at your store, The White House, Washington, D.C., a white celanese formal, \$49.50, last week, and sent it back this week with a note saying that it did not fit, and please remove the charge from her Deb account.  
There's evidence of powder stains or make-up base stains at the neck. To protect your patrons, your company has a policy that clothes cannot be worn and then returned. This policy is designed to insure that all goods sold will be fresh and new. Write a tactful, polite letter to Miss Williams explaining that you cannot accept the dress for credit. A white evening dress of celanese can be worn for years and can be worn all through the year.
11. As adjustment manager, Powers Discount House, Des Moines, Iowa, refuse to replace the Yasuki pearl in the ring for Miss Susan Waller, 1908 Main Street, Iowa City, Iowa, who returned it to you after having it six months. She reports that it has "scaled" or "peeled" and no longer has its original lustre. It must be, she writes, not a genuine cultured pearl but some inferior paste.

On examination you found the pearl was not defective, but had been subjected to some cleaning solution that had ammonia in it, or had been subjected to ammonia and water. Ammonia is most detri-

- mental to pearls. You had no guarantee on this ring. Most jewelry carries no guarantee (except watches).
12. Nine months ago you (owner of Marshall Awning Company, Atlanta, Georgia) sold the material and made 15 extra-long shower curtains for The Independent House, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The heavy-duty duck material, guaranteed mildew proof and shrink resistant (no more than 4 per cent), you purchased from The Sailing Company, St. Louis 19, Missouri. Two weeks ago you got a letter from the house director, Miss Louise Brooks, and you also received a spotted, shrunk curtain. Right away you mailed the curtain and a complaint letter to the St. Louis firm asking about the guarantee on the material. You were refused on the basis that the curtains were abused by laundries—too strong a bleach and too-hot water. Moreover, you were reminded that the curtains were guaranteed for six months (by the Sailing Company) . . . not nine. Since the Sailing Company will not back up the material, you can not afford to replace the curtains at your expense. Write Miss Brooks and refuse the adjustment.
13. *From:* Record Club, New York 6, New York. *To:* Miss Faye Imerson, 1907 Shades Mountain Road, Arlington, Virginia. *Case:* Miss Imerson ordered three famous-name record albums at \$3.95 each. She included money order sufficient to cover price and postage. Today she writes and asks if she can send the records back and get her money. *Refused adjustment:* All record sales are final. Each record has been auditioned critically. She was the first to play her records. And she has saved by ordering direct from the Record Club. *Empathy:* The script and language of her letter indicate that she is a high school student. For desirable specificness, make any plausible references to current hits and popular entertainers.
14. *From:* Service Division, Lanning-Owens Electric Company, Chicago. *To:* Mrs. T. N. Thompson, 125 Windsor Drive, Birmingham. *Case:* Refuse Mrs. Thompson's request for free repairs on her broiler (a wedding gift over two years ago). The guarantee accompanying every broiler covers defective workmanship or materials for a year. Time, moves, and use cause deterioration that no guarantee can cover (most defects are reported in 30 days). Broiler is badly rusted; coils snapped in several spots, probably because of moisture and failure to use regularly. Offer to rewire entire heating unit (\$10.50, actual cost). Return in two weeks. Need authorization.

### Compromise Adjustments

1. *From:* Merel's Studio, Nashville, Tennessee. You are T. J. Merel. *To:* Mr. James T. Funk, Clarksville, Tennessee, Box 7549. *Case:* Mr. Funk's 16-year-old daughter, Mary, came in for a sitting for a miniature to be done in oil. Her father paid \$30 for the custom sitting. This sitting includes an informal group of poses. Eight poses are submitted from which to choose. None of the proofs suited Mr. Funk

or Mary. Mr. Funk writes you and asks that you do eight more poses at your expense. *Adjustment:* Mary was not cooperative. She wanted to pose as she thought best. You did the best you could to make her feel relaxed and to catch her in a "natural" mood, but she would not do as you asked her to do. You will take her picture again four more times for \$15 if she will agree to cooperate. Mary is an attractive girl and could be photographed to please the most discriminating admirer.

2. The manager, The Decorating Shop, Lacy's, New York, made oyster-white draperies for Mrs. James P. Moore, South Shore Drive, Greenwich, Connecticut. You hung them in her living room three weeks ago. Her companion who shares her home answered the door and she approved of the new draperies. Today you get a letter from Mrs. Moore saying that some machine oil is on one panel of the drapery and she wants you to make a new panel to take its place. The oil, she says, is in the bottom right-hand corner. *Adjustment:* The draperies were carefully packed in tissue paper when they were brought to her home. Her roommate checked them. You will remake the panel at actual cost to you of \$12.50. Get her reaction—or action.
3. *From:* De Luxe Cleaners, St. Louis 5, Missouri. *To:* Mrs. N. P. Peabody, Route #8, Bellville, Illinois. *Case:* Mrs. Peabody sends a red knit suit to you and asks that you stretch it to her measurements. She says she just had the suit cleaned at your establishment a week ago. *Adjustment:* The suit has black dirt streaks on the front of the skirt and powder stains at the neck. Her charge account reveals that the suit was cleaned a month ago. You will be glad to stretch the suit to the measurements she sent, but you will have to charge her half the regular deluxe cleaning price. So instead of paying the usual \$3, she will pay just \$1.50. See if she agrees to such an arrangement.
4. *From:* City Electric Shop, Chicago 4, Illinois. *To:* Mrs. F. T. Finch, 1560 Lake Shore Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois. *Case:* The G. W. steam iron she returned to you has been abused. Evidently water was left in it and the iron corroded. When she used the iron, brown stains appeared on the clothing. Along with her iron she received an instruction booklet which made it clear that irons should always be drained after they were used. This care is especially important where the water is hard. Her iron cannot be repaired, but to keep her sold on G. W. irons, you'll sell her a new one at half price, \$7.50. This price is less than she would pay for a simple dry iron.
5. About a \$20 sport jacket bought by J. P. Hemphill, 26 The Downs, Athens, Ohio, write a compromise adjustment letter. *Your company:* Stein's, Kansas City, Missouri. *The case:* Sport jacket arrives back at Stein's with sleeve torn at elbow three weeks after purchase. On examination, elbow has definite hole made in shape of *L* in left sleeve. The right sleeve shows no wear . . . and no tear. Apparently he caught sleeve on something sharp like a nail or tack. Out of the

500 coats you have sold in the last year, you have had no complaints on the material wearing out. *Decision:* To keep Hemphill's good will, you will have one of your expert seamstresses mend the sleeve at no cost, but you can't give him a new coat or refund the money.

6. An electric can opener, \$29.95, from Pendleton-Rush Company, San Francisco, California, is sent back to the company with a letter from Paul Appletree, 198 Mojave Avenue, Redding, California, who complains that the Whiz-Zip opener is not dependable. He has owned the opener just under three months and it won't perform efficiently.

Evidently the opener has been washed many times. Because of the motor, electric can openers cannot be washed. Instructions attached to them clearly warn against this. Send him a check for the purchase price, but because you believe that the Whiz-Zip opener, if properly cared for, is as dependable as higher-priced models, you want Mr. Appletree to return the check and accept your offer: at no cost, you will replace the parts, oil the opener, and return it to him in workable shape.

7. Someone in Arthur Gay's household (1905 Pasadena Avenue, Sacramento, California) apparently used sharp knives, harsh detergents, and/or scouring pads on the triple-plated silver meat platter bought from you, Harry Flora, Flora's Jewelry Store, Los Angeles 10, for \$25.95 some months ago.

You can resilver the platter at cost to you of \$10. With the correct care, the platter should last many years. For just \$2 more you can supply a thin wooden board for the platter. If he uses the board, the platter will be protected from knife cuts. Offer to resilver at cost. Suggest the compromise and suggest he purchase the wooden board.

8. The 90-day guarantee on the Remington razor bought by H. H. Bowers, 1200 Riverside Drive, Boston, Massachusetts, expired 30 days ago. During the guarantee period you replaced one head, but now the razor needs another head. Cost to Mr. Bowers will be \$3.75 (factory cost). You cannot send him a new razor. Your company, Remington Razor Corporation, 144 Delaware Street, Rutherford, New Jersey, is sending him detailed instructions on cleaning and caring for his razor, however. *Essence:* No oiling, no sharpening compound.

9. You are adjustment manager, Potter's Camera Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Claim letter arrives from Philip B. Harris, student, Box J-245, University City, Pennsylvania. *Case:* Camera has obviously been dropped and shutter damaged. Your guarantee covers any defect of workmanship or materials within one year of normal use, but it does not cover careless handling. *Adjustment:* You have to have check for \$3.95 before you will put camera in first-class condition and renew guarantee. Or you'll repair camera and return it COD. Replacement of shutter is necessary. *Resale:* Enthusiastic talk about photography.

10. As manager of the Corona Sales Company, 876 North Washington Street, Chicago, Illinois, you receive a sarcastic letter and Model B Ditto mimeograph machine from Chester E. Felts, 546 Riverside Drive, South Bend, Indiana. Mr. Felts writes: "I want my money back and am entitled to it under your guarantee of satisfaction or your money back. Model B won't feed regularly and when it does send a page through it prints very unevenly. I know that the trouble is not with my stencils because I tried them on other machines and they did fine. It worked all right for ten days. But when I got back from my vacation (during which time my machine wasn't used) it wouldn't work."

Your service man finds that the rubber feed rollers and the main print roller have softened and deteriorated badly, as any rubber will do when it comes in contact with oil. To you it seems obvious that the soaking in oil while Mr. Felts was away had done its damage. With new rollers on the machine, the stencil prints neat mimeograph copies. You even tried the discarded stencil which Mr. Felts had left on the drum. In making the adjustment you must back up your guarantee; but probably Mr. Felts still needs a mimeograph and can't buy one of the same size and style for less than \$100 elsewhere. So you try to sell the machine back to him. Return his money (\$89.50) in some favorable way; then, having won his confidence, review the facts and try to get him to return the money to you with his authorization for the shipment of the mimeograph to him again. You will pay for the new rollers (\$3.75) and \$2.50 shipping charges. With proper care, the Model B Ditto will give him good service.

### Credit Refusal and Modifications

1. *Your company:* Van Fleet, Inc., 1987 Saint Clair Street, Detroit, Michigan, manufacturers of car coats and jackets. You are the credit manager. *Write:* The Campus Shop, 1200 University Avenue, East Lansing. *Case:* You receive an order today for \$2,500. Your firm has sold this customer for 11 years on its regular terms and has extended a high credit of \$1,500. The books show \$2,000 now, \$400 of which is due and \$1,600 due in 20 days. Payments are made slowly. *Action:* On the one hand, because of the amount still on the creditor's books, it will not be advisable to refuse the order outright; on the other hand, because of the long history of delayed payments, the amount now due, and the large increase in the size of the order, it will not be wise to approve full credit.
2. As credit sales manager of the Van Buren Company, St. Louis, Missouri, you have to acknowledge the order of Mr. Clark W. Weaver, who (according to the financial statements he sent with his application for credit and his first order for work shirts and pants amounting to \$534) is the sole owner of the Weaver Dry Goods Company, Dothan, Alabama. You followed up the references he gave, and they spoke well of his personal integrity and indicated that he is a reason-

ably good payer. Two said he pays within the terms; 3 said he was 15-45 days slow; 1 said "slow but sure." You are reluctant to extend credit to a man in a predominantly agricultural area who, at a time when farm income is high, has allowed his current ratio (quick assets to liabilities) to fall closer to 1:1 than to the desirable 2:1. Furthermore, with the uncertainty of the government's action on farm supports, you think now is a poor time (from Mr. Weaver's viewpoint as well as your own) for him to be taking on new obligations without straightening out his present ones. You suspect maladjusted inventories and lackadaisical collections. As much as you'd like to fill this order, you have to refuse. It's wiser for him to cut his order in half and pay cash (he'll still get the customary 2 per cent discount). Since rush orders can be handled within four days, he can keep adequate stock on hand. Perhaps later on, when he has reduced his current liabilities and strengthened his cash position, your regular credit privileges of 2/10, n/30 can be made available. After you give him the business reasons for refusing, offer a compromise solution as attractively as you can and strive to convince him that Van Buren shirts and pants are the best buy he can make.

3. *Your company:* White Manufacturing Company, 987 Sixth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *Write:* Maloney's Furniture Company, 9764 Broad Avenue, Newark, New Jersey. *Case:* Maloney's has been slow in paying. The last bill (Invoice 98754), amounting to \$438.98, became due two months ago. You made several attempts to collect it, but in answer to your last two letters your company received two remittances totaling \$200. Today you receive a check for \$138.98 (leaving a balance of \$100) and an order for new goods amounting to \$448. *Action:* The present order will have to be COD. On COD shipments Maloney's will have to deposit 10 per cent. Remind also about the balance of \$100.
4. *Credit wanted:* By Mrs. Whitney McMillen, 1943 Ridgecrest, Oak Park, Illinois. *From:* Hudson Field & Co., Chicago 4. *Case:* Her husband earns about \$20,000 a year. She has accounts in a dozen other stores, and she has been a good cash customer in your store. Reports from other stores are that she buys self-indulgently and pays the same way. Her other accounts always show some balance past due. Other credit managers say she is a typical "grief case." Write the letter that will keep her good will but that refuses her credit.
5. *Credit wanted:* By the Mary Ann Dress Shop, 187 Linden Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan. *From:* Jantzen Sporting Goods Company, New York 19, N.Y. *Case:* Harold Helms, manager of Mary Ann Dress Shop, is new in retailing, has limited capital. He, however, is progressive and alert. He ordered \$500 worth of sweaters and skirts to be delivered in time for the opening of his store next month. Because of Helms's limited capital and experience, you will write him and suggest that he cut the size of his order to about half and that he pay

cash less 2 per cent discount. You will be glad to handle all of his orders on this basis until the time comes when you can extend credit to him. To help him display the new sweaters and skirts you can send him handsome advertising cards. And for his sales help, you will be glad to send a sales manual.

6. As credit manager of the Bowman Wholesale Grocery Company, Chicago 6, Illinois, you must refuse credit to Perry Sanford, proprietor of the Big Midget Food Mart (a small, independent grocery store doing business for just over six months in a poor section of town), because of the general instability of businesses of this type. Although Sanford's references show him to be a dependable young man and his business seems to be taking hold, still it is your experience that a business of this type has to establish itself on a year-round basis before it becomes a worthwhile credit risk. His store is small. The mortality rate for small grocery stores is high. From your salesman, Terry McDonald, you learn that Sanford has made occasional cash purchases from your company during the past two months. Naturally, you would like to increase this cash business and, if the account proves stable, cultivate it later on a credit basis. Write Mr. Sanford a definite but tactful refusal of credit extension, but leave the way open for credit business next year. Stress the value of the 2 per cent cash discount.
7. About a year ago James Hullet, Hullet Construction Company, Kansas City, Kansas, set up his own company, built some \$12,000-to-\$17,000 houses. During the first six months he paid his bills to you, Moore Manley, St. Louis, Missouri, in prompt fashion, but now he owes \$1,200, 45 days past due. Also it is \$200 over the credit limit established for him a year ago. Yesterday he ordered \$400 worth of hardware with a note at the bottom of the order that said, "I know my account is past due, but I'll soon be selling these houses. Real estate is just in a slump right now." Acknowledge Hullet's order but refuse to fill it. He can pay cash for this order, or better still, clear up the account before buying more.
8. *Your company:* Rogers Manufacturing Company, Seattle 10, Washington. *Write:* Willard Department Store, 300 First Street, Tacoma, Washington. *Case:* The department store has been given a \$2,000 credit limit with your company. The store exceeded that amount twice recently, and you allowed it. On the second occurrence about two months ago, you wrote Mr. David Willard, manager, to keep within the limit. Now he sends you an order for \$1,100.97, which with outstanding bills brings the amount owed you to \$3,190.97. Write him that you are processing the order, but before sending the goods you want a check for at least \$500. Perhaps his business has outgrown his present limit. If he will send his latest financial statement, you will take up the matter of increasing the limit.

9. *Your company:* H. and M. Automotive Parts Company, Kansas City, Missouri. *Write:* J. R. Morman, Morman Service Station, Olathe, Kansas. *Case:* Morman has applied for credit (3/10, n/60) for 6 dozen auto batteries, totaling \$880. Credit Bureau reports he is slow in paying his personal bills fully. The city of Olathe is moving in the opposite direction from where his station is. Two stations nearby have just closed. *Action:* As credit manager tell Morman that he must pay cash for this order. Suggest reduced order.
10. *Your company:* Steck Equipment Company, Boston 5. You are credit manager. *Write:* Donald Hall, 1542 River Road, Charleston, West Virginia. *Case:* Hall, in a persuasively written application, asks for too much credit for his own good and your own company's safety. He's planning to open a small stationery-equipment store, and he's sure he can make a go of it. He grew up in Charleston, worked as a clerk in one of the banks, is a member of three civic organizations, and has a background of business training at the University of West Virginia. His order is for \$2,000 worth of supplies for which he proposes to pay \$400 down and the rest in four monthly installments. He says he proposes to start with about \$12,000 worth of stock—and you assume that to several other potential suppliers he is making the same kind of proposal. He shows \$3000 (cash) assets. No liabilities as yet. Will rent 48 x 100 store building in downtown area for \$200 a month. Has five-year lease with option to buy. *Action:* Refuse him because your terms are 2/10, n/30 and because you adhere to the 2:1 ratio of quick assets to liabilities as a rock-bottom requirement. Also because of the readjustments in the West Virginia economy attributable to disturbances in mining operations and manufactures. Point out to him the benefits of getting more capital to start with. Offer him a 5 per cent discount for cash with order, and try to build long-time good will and immediate cash business.

### Special Requests

1. Write Edward M. Burrow, director of the United States Information Agency, Washington 21, D.C., and ask him to speak at his own expense at Interfraternity week, a student-sponsored event (with very limited funds) at your university. Set the proper dates and time. Mr. Burrow was formerly active in network television at Columbia Broadcasting System. His work in such programs as *See It Today* and *People to People* is well known. In his present post, Mr. Burrow is responsible for disseminating information about the country to people overseas. He works closely with the President of the United States.
2. The Boys' Vacation Fund, Inc., commissions you to write an effective appeal raising money to send deserving boys to summer camp. The fund maintains four fully equipped camps in upstate New York. They hope to have 1,300 boys this summer. The mailing consists of a letter on yellow stock with facsimile typing and actual inside ad-

dress, a simple two-color folder on newsprint stock, and a reply envelope with stamp pasted on. Write the letter copy explaining that \$40 will pay for two weeks for one boy, or \$20 for one week. Your mailing list is made up of 10,000 doctors.

3. Jerome B. Tardy, publisher of *Tempo, Inc.*, Book Division, New York 6, was formerly vice president of advertising for Doubleday and Company. He is also a past president of the Publishers Ad Club. For the September meeting (11-14) at the Sherman House, Chicago, the Direct Mail Advertising Association members want Mr. Tardy to be their luncheon speaker on the 12th. His talk could be on something of his choice, or if he wants your suggestions—"How the Public Reacts to Direct Mail," or "The Future of Mail-Order Selling." His expenses from New York to Chicago will be taken care of by the DMAA.
4. Assume that you are to write a letter for the man you want to be governor of your state. This man (a graduate from law school from the university, a member of a legal fraternity, Presbyterian church leader, civic worker, and lawyer in your town) plans to help education by having a 10 per cent increase in state educational funds, by increasing the university budget by 4 per cent (raising salaries, building additional classrooms and dormitory space). Set up a form letter to go to teachers in your state using a faked inside address.
5. As a member of the Historical Society of your city (or city nearby if your town doesn't have such a society), write a persuasive letter to the leading citizens of the area urging them to save a historical site. So many famous landmarks are being removed in the name of progress, and yet some cities like Chicago have kept the famous old water tower. San Francisco has held on to the trolleys. If you do not know of such a site, then you can assume that there is a movement to get rid of the water tower in Chicago or the trolleys in San Francisco. Ask for money which will be used in favorable publicity (or educational materials) that will help to save famous old landmarks.
6. Mr. Charles E. Snell, candidate for House of Representatives, your state, would make an excellent speaker for your class of prelaw students. You want him to speak the first of next month at the main auditorium of your university. You have no money for expenses. The class would like for him to talk on the structure or framework of the state government for 30 minutes. You want him to lead a discussion for 30 minutes. Town lawyers will be invited.
7. As a member (a married woman) of the Modern Culture Club, 2181 University Avenue, Austin, Texas, try to persuade Anthony Hull, designer and manufacturer of unusual and expensive candles (Faroy, Inc., Houston) to demonstrate candle making to a group of Austin women, the second Tuesday of next month at the Austin Country

Club. You'll arrange tables for display and do what you can to get the tables ready for him to display representative samples of Faroy candles. Faroy candles are expensive; prices range from 50¢ to \$20. Perhaps he could show how scent is put in the candles, how he makes candles in shapes of animals and birds, and how he makes thin tapers as well as thick, fat candles. Make it clear that he'll come at his own expense, but his talk should help boost sales for Faroy. This group of women from the upper-income level are good patrons of gift shops which are appropriate outlets for Faroy candles.

8. As sales manager of *Country Club Woman*, a new magazine put out by F. O. Stubbs, Publishing Company, New York, prepare a letter to all country clubs asking for names of their members so that the magazine can mail the members free copies of the *first* issue. Since many clubs probably will not want to give over their membership lists, write a persuasive letter and ask the club manager to fill out a membership list, with indication of marital status and verification that each woman is a member in good standing. The advantage the manager will have is that he, too, will be able to direct certain mailings to this prepared list. F. O. Stubbs will send his wife a year's subscription free to *Country Club Woman*.
9. Sit in the chair of Professor H. A. Pilons, the man of many activities, who right now, as director of the Oklahoma Business Conference, has the task of lining up some twenty speakers for the meeting about six months from now in Oklahoma City at the Biltmore Hotel.

One man he'd like very much to speak before the retailers' group is Walter Loving, president of Aber-Crombie, New York (about whom he has read in a recent *Time*, Business and Finance Section). Pilons wants especially to have a headliner to attract these men and women to the current meeting because their attendance at the conference has always been the poorest of the groups attending (they don't want to be away from their businesses over the week end). So he has decided to test his ability to persuade big-time operators to come down at their own expense and without a speaker's fee (which most of the men he'd want to invite are accustomed to receiving) in this one letter to Loving before writing all the other letters he will have to send.

The *Time* article tells of Loving's meteoric rise in retailing to the controlling ownership of Aber-Crombie and a half-dozen other stores like it, and quotes him as planning a chain of smaller stores all over the country. Adding to that with talk he has picked up at conventions, Pilons figures that Loving may likely be interested in looking over the situation in Oklahoma, preparatory to opening stores. Pilons decides that this idea is the entering wedge for the letter which will ask Loving to attend the meeting and to talk to the retailers' group meeting (Pilons figures that he can attract at least 100 to it) on the Friday of the meeting, 2:00-3:00 P.M., about bonus systems, promotional practices, or any other personnel-management problem and

how he has met it—and then for another hour to lead a group discussion. It's the sort of thing he could do easily and well.

Since the professor needs to plan far ahead, when you write the letter for him (on university-letterhead stationery), you'll ask Loving if he can't let you know within a month.

10. *To:* Direct Advertising Association, Detroit 1, Michigan. *From:* You (a professor of advanced sales writing, your college). *Ask:* For your 120 students per semester, you would like to have the direct-mail letter campaigns that won awards during the last five years. The usual fee for use of the current year's campaigns is \$50. You have no fund to take care of such a fee. You would like to have these campaigns for two months and you will be glad to pay postage on them both ways.
11. *To:* Famous opera star Eleanor Stephens, Tutor House, New York 16, New York. *From:* You (director of Civic Center Movement). *Ask:* Miss Stephens, a native of your state, has given benefit performances before in order to encourage interest in music in some of the larger cities. You and your committee feel that it is time your city had a civic center. You want her to perform in the fund-raising activity. *Case:* You have arranged for the present auditorium to be used by Miss Stephens April 11. A dinner party for members of the committee and patrons will be given on the 11th and she is included in the party. She will not have to sing until 8:15. Your committee can pay for her transportation to and from New York, but you can not pay her a fee.
12. *To:* Educational Testing Service, Cooperative Test Division, Princeton, New Jersey. *From:* You (assume that you are taking practice teaching in preparation for a teaching position). Your teacher has told you to gather all the free and inexpensive material you can. At the end of the course you are to present the teacher with all this helpful material. *Send:* A letter requesting *Sequential Tests of Educational Progress*. The footnote in your main textbook (J. M. Hook's *Principles of High School Teaching*) said that teachers were able to secure this testing aid. You believe these tests, the report that goes with them, as well as the "Manual for Interpreting Scores" would be a help to you. Write a persuasive letter and see if you can get this free material. Explain that you are practice teaching in English at the high school of your home town.
13. *Write* one letter that would serve as a guide for a mailing to 100 representative firms. You want copies of whatever material they have prepared for the use of their correspondents and typists—correspondents' manuals, typists' manuals, bulletins on letter writing, or other company publications containing suggestions for correspondents. Are there classes for correspondents? Training films? Other visual aids? You cannot pay for the sample material they may be able to send;

but you will send a copy of the completed report to the firms that co-operate with you. Tell them no names will be used without permission. *You are:* Assistant editor of the National Office Managers Association. You have been asked to prepare a report on "Methods Currently Used by Business Houses to Train Young Correspondents." The *NOMA Bulletin* has a circulation of about 30,000, enough to have real influence, if well handled.

14. *From:* Junior Welfare Association, 7543 Country Club Lane, Peoria, Illinois. *To:* Arnold Plummer, world-famous golfer. *Object:* To get Plummer to play exhibition round at reduced fee. Money will go to Crippled-Children's Clinic, sponsored by the Junior Welfare Association. *Case:* Ask Plummer to put on a golf exhibition the 20th of next month at the Peoria Country Club. Although Plummer gets \$3,000 for a one-day exhibition, try to persuade him to do his part for the crippled children by taking \$1,500. You will arrange for him to have favorable publicity in the newspapers, on TV, and on radio. For him to have the most effective publicity you would like for him to send pictures of himself out on the course and at home. As in any selling message, you need an action ending.

## Sales

1. *Mailing list:* Head football coaches and high schools in your state. *Product:* Shield Mouth Guard, developed by Roberts Dental Manufacturing Company, Buffalo 9, New York. Provides maximum protection and complete comfort to players of all contact sports. It is a resilient plastic guard that is custom-fitted to the individual player's mouth. Representative of company makes shield in a few minutes. Made of pure, hospital-approved vinyl. Does not interfere with breathing or speaking. Tasteless, odorless, non-toxic; harmless to teeth and gums. Fits firmly and comfortably. Keeps mouth moist. Always holds its shape—will not deteriorate. Satisfaction guaranteed. *Cost:* \$3.50 each; 10 per cent discount on orders of 24 or more. *Need:* 53 per cent of all mishaps in contact sports involve injuries to the mouth and teeth. *Action:* Enclose folder with picture of Shield Mouth Guard and postage-free card for convenience in reply.
2. *Mailing list:* Send personalized letter to parents of high-school and junior-high-school students. *Company:* You are local distributor for Regal typewriters. *Product:* New Regal Safari portable. Magic margin for setting margins. Touch control for setting touch. Twin-Pak ribbon changer for changing ribbons in 10 seconds. Type bar speeds up as it hits the paper to achieve etched look. *Colors:* Regimental Red, Oyster Gray, Caribbean Blue, and Antique Gold. *Cost:* \$189.50. *Guarantee:* 90-day guarantee covers parts and service. *Theme:* The new Regal lets students spend less time on muscle work and more time on brain work. Students can earn better grades in school when they type notes and papers. In terms of better grades, more interest in school work, the development of a business skill

that could mean earning power in high school or college and definitely would be useful during one's working years, seek to get the parents to come to your store or to let you bring a portable model to their home for demonstration. Since this is a local list, you'd just ask them to call you if they want you to come out, just come in if they prefer to try the Regal Safari portable in the store.

3. *Mailing list:* Individuals in any state or area earning \$6,000 or over annually. *Company:* Mozaks Speaker System, Inc., Trenton 7, New Jersey. You are sales manager. *Product:* Pre-packaged hi-fidelity units to go in built-ins around a fireplace, on a paneled wall, or in a bedroom. *Cost:* B-207 speaker system, \$160. Turntable, \$50; tone arm, \$20; cartridge and integrated amplifier, \$175. Cabinet of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood must be braced and padded, about \$20. *Theme:* Purchaser gets a better set if he buys direct from you and installs the system himself. Lots of money goes for the factory-built cabinet. *Action:* Direct sale. Enclose folder complete with pictures of units built in around a fireplace, on a paneled wall, and in a bedroom. Also enclose order blank and business reply envelope.
4. Last month's *Reader's Digest* ran an ad by Du Pont promoting new Fire Retardant Paint. "It is a durable, washable interior flat finish that slows the spread of flame. For years firemen have pleaded, 'Find a way to give us a 5-minutes' jump on most fires and we can control them.' This new Du Pont Fire Retardant Paint helps supply the answer. It passes the rigorous tests of Underwriters' Laboratories. You can use it on any interior surface, even over old paint, at home or business. It can help protect you from a disastrous fire loss. This paint can be brushed, sprayed, or rolled on. It is available in the colors you want: blue, yellow, pink, green, gray, or white."

Tests were run on some temporary Cape Canaveral buildings. Those painted with the retardant paint did not catch on fire as quickly as the temporary buildings that were not painted with the special paint.

As a dealer for paints in your city, you bought some of this paint, but have not been able to sell as much of it as you would like, so you try a simple, single-page, personalized mailing to your good homeowner customers. Du Pont Fire Retardant Paint sells for \$6.25, approximately 30 cents more a gallon than regular top-brand paint.

5. Follow up your customers a month later with another personal letter about Du Pont Fire Retardant Paint (preceding case).
6. *Dealer Sales:* Send to paint stores, hardware and lumber companies a letter over the signature of the sales manager for Du Pont. The dealer pays \$3.50 a gallon for Fire Retardant Paint and sells for \$6.25 (two preceding cases). Half-page ads will run for next two months in *Life* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. You can send cuts and mats for local newspaper advertisings.

7. *Company:* Westinghouse Electric Corporation, commercial laundry equipment sales department, Mansfield, Ohio. *Mailing List:* Purchasing agents for state universities. *Product:* "Do-it-yourself" coin-operated dry-cleaner machine. *Cost:* \$580 for one unit. Must be paid for in full. Price includes tax and delivery cost. Cost to student for one load, \$2. *Installation:* One vent to outside. Servicing done by local man. Choice of two power systems: 115 volts, 60 cycles, single phase; 230 volts, 60 cycles, three phase. *Safe:* All wiring is covered and insulated. User has no direct access to the cleaning fluid. *Capacity:* One machine holds 9½ pounds of clothing (many machines hold only 8 pounds). Takes 10 minutes for complete cycle. Wash-and-wear clothes need no ironing. *Action:* A representative will call and work out details. Set up form letter with faked inside address and reply card.
8. Follow up letter (see preceding case) to those who did not send reply card. *Theme:* Economy and convenience. To the purchasing agent with residential halls averaging 264 people, show him how economical and profitable one or two machines would be. The university pays \$580 for one unit. The cost of operating machine is about 50¢ per load, but the student pays \$2 for one load of 9½ pounds of clothing. Westinghouse installed three units at Mary Burke Hall, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, last year and already they have paid for themselves. Two hundred and fifty women live at Mary Burke. These women used the dry-cleaner machine for good cottons as well as woolens.
9. *Mailing list:* Members of American Automobile Club. *Product:* Radar Sentry, all-electronic radar detector for cars. Gives alert (a "beep") when car advances into radar-timed zoned area. Radar Sentry feels radar impulses which are focusing on a moving car from 1,200 to 1,500 feet away (about 1,000 feet beyond the critical point where a police monitor can begin measuring speed with accuracy). Requires no wires and no antenna. One thousand hour self-operating battery. Small, compact, does not obstruct vision. Magnetic base holds firmly on dash; equipped with clip for sunvisor mounting. Weight, 13 ounces; 3½" wide x 2¾" deep x 2½" high. *Cost:* \$39.95 postpaid. Money-back guarantee. Return in 10 days if not satisfied. COD orders accepted. Charge to Diners' Club Account (give card number and signature). Enclose addressed envelope and order blank. The Sentry is backed by Good Drivers' League of America. In the Chicago area alone 20,000 have been sold in the last two years.
10. To those who responded to your mailing (preceding case), you send another letter with a reply card for the responder to give you the name of a friend who might want a Sentry.
11. Two weeks after your first mailing to Members of American Automobile Club (Case 9), you send another mailing about the Radar Sentry. Make ordering easy.

12. *Mailing list:* Drug stores (send form letter). *Product:* No-colic nursing bottle. Poppet air valve allows just the right amount of air to enter the bottle, which permits the milk to flow freely as baby nurses. Eliminates vacuum which causes baby to strain and draw in air bubbles. Made of "Celanese Fortiflex"—the new tasteless, odorless, 100%-safe plastic. Can withstand temperatures of 260 degrees. Opens at both ends for easier, faster, and more thorough cleaning. Snug-fitting sanitary cap keeps nipple sterile when baby must travel; nipple always in feeding position, ready to use. Six different pastel colors of bottles per set. *Cost:* Set of six bottles, \$8.95 or \$1.95 for each nurser bottle. Drug store gets a 15 per cent reduction on price. *Company:* Arrowhead Sales and Service, 1200 Santee, Department S-11, Los Angeles 15, California. *Advertised:* Full-page ads in *Specialty Salesman* and *Drug Store Age*; 100,000,000 nursing bottles used in USA each year.
13. *Mailing list:* All persons who purchased duck stamps in your state last year (this list can be acquired from the office of the Director of Conservation). *Product:* Plastic decoy duck swims like a live duck. Two-year guarantee. Propelled by miniature motor operated on two flashlight batteries—controlled from bank or blind. *Company:* Delta Swim Decoy Company, Box 5424, Greenville, Mississippi. *Cost:* 1 decoy at \$9.95. *Advertised:* *Holiday* and *Sports Illustrated*.
14. *Mailing list:* Parents of high-school and college students. *Company:* Kent, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York 22. *Product:* Battery-operated pencil sharpener that is a cordless, precision-made, electric sharpener. It uses standard flashlight batteries and is a thoughtful gift to high school and college students for home, office, study, playroom. *Size:* 5" x 3½". Has sturdy plastic and metal case. Postage paid. Gift wrapped. *Cost:* \$6.95. One-quarter-page ads in *Seventeen*.
15. *Mailing list:* Homeowners in the Middle West. *Company:* Lawrence Hardware Company, 1311 10th Avenue, Milwaukee 10, Wisconsin. *Product:* Scoop tool sets (socket wrench sets and TV home-auto testing kit). Lifetime guarantee. Set includes the following: electronic tester, auto-repair manual, hip-roof tool box with lift-out tray, spark-plug socket with neopyrene inset, 5-piece punch set, 5-piece open-end wrench set, 7-piece chrome alloy socket set, 10-piece Allen wrench set, 13-piece tool set, water-pump pliers, ignition wrenches. *Cost:* \$29.95 and delivered to door for just \$1 down at time of delivery. For the electronic tester, manual, and tool box you would pay \$30 or more.
16. The following ad did not pull as well as you expected: "Shave anywhere! Anytime! No batteries! No cord! Royalmatic deluxe shaver, \$19.95. Shave for at least a week without electricity. All you have to do is recharge—just plug the Royalmatic Deluxe Shaver into electrical outlet overnight, once a week. No cord—rechargeable. Ideal for camp-

ing and vacation outing—airplane—car—train—excellent for home. Fully guaranteed one full year against all parts or material failure."

To pull sales, try a mailing to young men who are going away to prep school and to college. Many of the residence halls are not up to the required wiring for shavers, fans, sun lamps, radios, and hi-fi sets. Send a form letter from Royalmatic Deluxe Cordless Shaver Co., 1601 Grande Vista, Los Angeles 23, California.

17. Assume that you are campus representative of Bowen Clothiers, Cincinnati. Periodically a Bowen representative comes to campus and takes measurements for college blazers. The all-wool black blazers with an embroidered emblem of the school's coat of arms on the breast pocket are the usual college-cut, two-button, center vent, patch-pocket jackets. The buttons are metal. When the blazers are delivered, they are checked again for alterations by the tailor. Satisfactory fit is guaranteed or the money is refunded. Woodham Brothers of Cincinnati makes the blazers for Bowen.

Set up an effective form letter directed to juniors and seniors of your university. Make it clear that a check or money order for \$26.85 must accompany the order. Enclose folders illustrating and describing the jacket as well as order form and reply envelope.

18. Choose from the pages of a newspaper or magazine any product selling at \$5 to \$25 that could reasonably be sold by direct mail in one letter. Either copy the ad (with name of publication, date, and page reference) or cut it out and attach it neatly to a description of the mailing list you assume for your letter (remember to indicate distinctions of geography, vocation, sex, age, social or educational status if they apply, and any other pertinent factors). Submit these with your letter, properly adapted to the circumstances.
19. *Mailing list:* College teachers. *Company:* Simon and Bentley, Inc., 7 West 36th Street, New York 18. *Product:* Cap, gown, and hood cut to exact measurements and custom tailored in material (cotton, acetate, or dacron) of the individual's selection. Only authentic subject color and pattern used. Gowns for Doctors, Trustees, and Masters may be worn with either closed front or open front; the Bachelor's gown should be worn only closed. Materials laboratory tested for long wear. Curvette yoke, hugs the neck, will not gap. Only hand-stitching on yoke, panels, under collar; no bucking or bunching. Prices for gowns, hoods, and caps range in the following way: Bachelors—from \$31.70 to \$49.25; Masters—from \$39.20 to \$56.85; Doctors—from \$67.00 to \$94.65. Prices for Trustees' gowns are the same as prices for Doctors' gowns.

20. *Mailing list:* Elementary school teachers, your state. *Company:* Spencer Gifts, 191 Spencer Building, Atlantic City, New Jersey. *Product:* Electric Magnajector (a projector). Projects any illustrated material on to a 4' x 3' size screen. Slides can be used. Won't take films. Re-

produces snapshots, stamps, photographs, documents in original color. Ideal for showing student samples of work. Adjustable twin lens, on-and-off switch. Uses regular light bulb. UL approved. Case (12" x 8" x 4½") included. *Cost:* Magnajector, \$7.98. Screen (40 square inches), \$1.98. *Enclosures:* Folder with picture of Magnajector copy saying that over 300 teachers in New Jersey area are using these projectors in class. *Action:* Direct order. *Format:* Form letter with faked inside address.

21. *For dealer sales* (of preceding case), assume a mailing list to bookstores that handle school supplies. *Cost:* Dealer pays \$6 and can sell for \$7.98. *Enclosure:* Description of how successful bookstores in New York and New Jersey have been promoting the Magnajector. *Action:* Direct order. *Format:* Form letter with faked inside address.
22. Out of a hobby of candle making you have developed a growing retail and wholesale business from Houston, Texas. Although your company, Faroy, Inc., has accounts with Neiman Marcus, B. Altman, and Marshall Fields, you'd like to market in small specialty gift shops such as Old Quality Gift Shoppe, Austin, Texas; the Country Store, Urbana, Illinois; or Leopards, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. To economize, you set up a form letter asking for permission to send samples on consignment. Besides all colors of tall taper candles, you make candles in the shapes of birds, flowers, and candles in apothecary jars. Flat candles in the shape of iris leaves have sold well as have floating daisy candles. For back yard entertaining you have thick, durable candles, and candles on posts protected with glass lamps. Prices range from 50 cents to \$5 wholesale (100 per cent markup is generally taken by your customers).
23. *Mailing list:* Future homebuilders. List from F. W. Dodge. Select your area for your mailing. *Company:* National Gypsum Company, Buffalo 13, New York. *Product:* Twinsulation (20 per cent more efficient than ordinary mineral-wool insulation). Twinsulation consists of thick blankets of mineral wool wrapped in aluminum foil. Outside heat can't penetrate. Furnace heat can't escape. Double action saves up to 30 per cent on heating and cooling bills. Permanent vapor barrier on one side and a breather cover on the other, prevents transfer of water vapor . . . which may cause roofs and siding to rot, or paint to blister. Permanent fire barrier because mineral wool resists spread of flame. Triple-thick nailing flange makes Twinsulation easy to install. Edges won't rip or tear away. You can Twinsulate an average attic in a few hours, and in a few years it will pay for itself in reduced heating and cooling costs. *Cost:* Ask homebuilder to send dimensions of his home for an accurate estimate.
24. Follow up for those who did not respond to the mailing described in the preceding case.

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25. With emphasis today on programmed learning, *World Encyclopedia* developed the Cyclo-Teacher for sale along with a set of the 24-volume set. The Cyclo-Teacher device is designed to provide the student with the correct answer immediately, so that he may know at once that he is right, thus reinforcing his confidence in himself. Modern teaching techniques indicate the importance of this "reinforcing" concept as a means of stimulating the student's interest in learning. By knowing whether he is right or wrong immediately, the student is encouraged to learn more rapidly.

The Cyclo-Teacher system includes 40 different study cycles over 400 study slides with 6,000 questions, answers, facts, diagrams, and pictures. All of the cycles are based on important articles in the *World Encyclopedia*.

Quicker students may go through the particular study cycle more rapidly, slower students more slowly. Each unit was prepared by trained editors using the latest principles of educational psychology. Artists prepared special diagrams and pictures. Preparing one study cycle can cost as much as \$15,000. The set to owners of *World Encyclopedia*, however, costs \$67.50.

Send a letter to purchasers of *World Encyclopedia* from your home office, 198 Beacon Street, San Francisco 8, California, suggesting they buy the set from their local representative. The name of the local representative is filled in, as are the inside address and salutations. A folder with tear-off blank for ordering accompanies the letter.

26. Follow up your mailing to purchasers of *World Encyclopedia* (preceding case). This time have the letter come from the local representative in your area. Name a family who bought the Cyclo-Teacher and tell how much they enjoyed it. Ask for an opportunity to come and demonstrate the Cyclo-Teacher. Make replying easy. Sales in the New York, Boston, and Philadelphia area alone have been to over 50,000 people. Payments in three easy installments can be worked out.
27. *Mailing list:* Names of members of state fishing clubs and of tropical-fish collectors' clubs. *Company:* International Communications Corporation, Department B-111, 525 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, California. *Product:* Sea Eye, a self-contained, portable fish indicator. No installation on boat necessary. Just hold Sea Eye in your hand. No cables. Direct reading 0-120 feet. Completely transistorized. Flip switch; needle locates fish.  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " long; weight,  $8\frac{3}{4}$  pounds with batteries. *Cost:* \$95. *Users:* 10,000 sold in Florida and California last year. *Form:* Set up as a form letter. Assume picture of Sea Eye on card-velope (a fill-in foldover that enables the responder to return the needed information and/or instruction).
28. *Mailing list:* Homeowners, renters. *Company:* Goldsmith Brothers, 77 Nassau Street, New York 8. *Product:* Gardsman Home Fire Alarm.

No wires, no batteries. Can hang on wall (7-inch diameter). All metal. Activated by a bimetal mechanism which makes the alarm ring with a clang sound. Tested in New York laboratories—proved successful in 99 per cent of tests. Cost: \$23.95. Enclosure: Picture and reply card. Set up in form letter style.

29. The Nojax Company, 2300 Oakton Street, Des Plaines, Illinois, has sold about 8,000 of the product for which the company is named. In an effort to cut down on increased costs of materials and higher costs of distribution, the sales division has decided to try direct mail on the list of the Chicagoland Drivers Club in the metropolitan area, and has asked you (a free-lance direct-mail expert) to prepare a one-page mailing to go with a leaflet and order return card. With the sale of its list, the club will make available its plates for electroprocessing; so full inside addresses and salutations will be used, as well as the facsimile signature of Emil Nello, the president.

A small welded-steel truck (reminiscent of your little red wagon of kid days), Nojax—with its four rubber-tired roller-bearing wheels—simply takes the place of the flat part of the tire. It weighs 17 pounds. When the tire goes flat, the motorist in 3 minutes (less, if he's agile) can align cart and tire, drive slowly up on it, and drive away; the ramp, which falls down to let the car drive up, is locked into place by the weight of the car (weighing no more than 4,000 pounds). Rubber cushions help hold the tire snugly in place and prevent further damage to the deflated tire. Although one enthusiastic motorist (of the 4,000 in Chicago who've purchased Nojaxes) wrote that he drove 50 miles an hour for 30 miles on his Nojax, 35 miles an hour is the top safe speed advocated by the Company.

At \$14.95, plus a few cents COD and shipping charges, Nojax men think it's a good buy. They give it a 90-day guarantee (not money back, just a promise to make good if anything goes wrong). The Good Drivers League of America endorses it, as well as the Chicagoland Drivers Club. Try your deft hand, then, at selling this oversized roller skate to the 10,000 sample you're going to circularize.

## Collections

1. Three men (each in a different financial position) owe \$47.95 for top-coat bought from men's department, large department store, your city, two months ago. Write three letters.

One letter goes to the man of the \$15,000-a-year bracket. Old customer. Old resident. Holds responsible position in one of the insurance companies of your town. Wife. No children. Member of Rotary.

2. Second letter (preceding case) goes to janitor of the high school. Earns \$3,600 a year. Wife. Four children. Rents home. Customer two years. Slow payer. Steady worker.

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3. Third letter (preceding case) goes to new customer. Fair credit risk. After several years of related experience, moved to town five months ago to open service station. Possibility of \$10,000 income. Married.
4. As credit manager for Inheritance Furniture Company, Raleigh, North Carolina, write to the purchasing agent at your university who bought \$3,640 of furniture: 4 sofas @ \$300 (\$1,200); 1 decorator's lamp, \$99.50; 4 chests @ \$80 (\$320); 14 end tables @ \$50 (\$700); 16 chairs @ \$80 (\$1,280). Tax and shipping, \$40.50. Furniture is for new residence hall.

University had not bought any furniture from you for nine months. Welcome back. Resale material and sales promotional material should be worked into your letter. For all universities, Inheritance Company gives discount of 20 per cent on regular price. Account is 75 days old.

5. Pilgrim's Furniture Store, Charleston, West Virginia, bought living-room, dining-room, bedroom furniture amounting to \$3,640 from Inheritance Furniture Company, Raleigh, North Carolina, 75 days ago on terms 2/10, n/30. Fifteen days after the furniture was sent Inheritance sent the routine reminder. No response from that notice or from another when the account was 30 days overdue. Your salesman, H. L. Snow, reports that unemployment is high in West Virginia, and that the store is not turning over its stock. Mr. Pilgrim hinted to Snow that he could not pay Inheritance until he sold more furniture.

Your job as credit manager is to write Mr. J. P. Pilgrim a friendly letter, but definitely point out the advantages of a good credit rating. He is a new customer of yours and you want to establish good working relationships.

6. The Decorator's Shoppe, Greenwich, Connecticut, purchased furniture totaling \$3,640 from Inheritance Furniture Company, Raleigh, North Carolina, seven days ago on terms 2/15, n/30. Mr. Robert Merrill, owner, has been your customer for 10 years. He has the money, usually, but rarely pays you within the discount period. Try to encourage him in your letter to take advantage of the discount. He can purchase more tables, chairs, or sofas with the discount saving.
7. For the fraternity or sorority of your choice, set up a form letter that could be sent to a parent whose child is behind on house bills. Assume that it is March and that the bill is owed for \$142. The practice your group has used in the past is to take the fraternity pin of any member when bills are left unpaid for two months. His two months will be up next week.
8. Thirty days ago you acknowledged an initial order from the Sweet Shop, Madison, Wisconsin, for:

2 dozen boxes (6 jars in a box) Coconut-toast spread (retail, \$1; wholesale, 50¢)

2 dozen boxes (6 jars in a box) Chocolate-honey spread (retail, \$1; wholesale, 50¢)

Shipping charges \$6.72

to be charged under regular terms of 2/10, n/30 to Mr. H. H. Gates, owner of the shop. As credit manager of Sunshine Food Company, Hollywood, Florida, you sent a reminder of the discount. On this 30th day you will write a friendly note, reminding him of the due date and containing resale on one of the items, and sales-promotional material on a new item—de-fatted nuts. For the dieter these low-calorie nuts answer the need. Usual 6 pecans average 200 calories, but these Lo-Cal pecans are only 100 calories. Mr. Gates can buy the large pecans for 60 cents a pound and sell them for \$1.15.

9. On the 45th day you wrote another short, friendly note to Mr. Gates of the Sweet Shop (preceding case), but it brought no answer. Now, although the account is 60 days old (30 days overdue), you begin persuasive efforts to make Mr. Gates pay. This is a heavy buying season, it's true; but the demand for Sunshine Foods is pretty steady—and steady payments will enable him to maintain steady orders and sales. "Keep the account in shape" is the theme.
10. The letter you wrote Mr. Gates (preceding problem) went unanswered. When the account was 80 days overdue you wrote a long "let's talk it over" letter, but it too was ignored. Ten more days have elapsed; so you're forced to turn to outside help if the check or satisfactory arrangement isn't forthcoming soon. The National Credit Bureau may not get your money for you, but the report you'll have to send within five days won't help Gates' credit standing. For his sake and yours you would prefer that he pay now and not have this report affect his business—as it will, inevitably. If he pays up within five days, he can still get goods on credit, open new accounts, buy what he needs when he needs it. The letter should tell specifically what will happen, with the viewpoint of helping him avoid it.
11. One of the problems of Deb accounts is getting the teenagers to pay, and to pay on time. At the store where you are credit manager, Town and Country, Mountainbrook, Maryland, you set up a form letter that can go to the parents of the teenager explaining how much is owed and how long it is past due. Emphasis should be given to how much your store enjoys having the teenagers shop there. Your store personality, atmosphere, merchandise, are all centered around these young buyers.
12. Prepare a letter to teenagers (see preceding case) explaining the value of maintaining a good credit rating at this age and time. Leave a space for amount due and date of account. Most of these involve amounts of \$10 to \$25.

13. As credit manager for the Debrift Wholesalers, Atlanta, Georgia, you granted credit to Mr. Daniel Wade, manager of the Toggery Shop, 445 Prince Avenue, Athens, Georgia, on terms 2/10, n/30 for \$165 worth of men's rayon robes (6 navy robes, size 38, @ \$15 and 6 wine polka dot print robes, size 36, @ \$12.50). On the 8th day you sent him the usual form calling attention to the discount date; but when you received no reply, you took it for granted that he would pay during the net period. On the 28th day you sent him another form note telling him that the amount was due by the 30th. But again no reply. So, when the account was 45 days old (15 days overdue), you sent another memorandum note. Still no luck. Now write a collection letter to be sent when the account is 30 days overdue. Keep in mind the goods bought, his use of the credit account, and sales promotional talk for the coming season.
14. The letter you wrote to Mr. Daniel Wade of the preceding case when the account was 30 days overdue went unanswered. Fifteen days later you wrote what you thought was a persuasive letter, still confident in its assumption. The idea behind this letter was: "We know you don't like this delay any more than we do, and we are sure that you will want to send us your check for \$165 for the men's rayon robes sent you on account, now 45 days overdue. Your record clearly tells us you realize the value of paying promptly." Now Mr. Wade's account is 60 days overdue. Write him and tell him that he should pay his obligation to keep the reputation he now enjoys.
15. Still no luck in getting a check from Mr. Wade of the two preceding cases. When the account was 75 days past the due date you wrote: "Please check your books this morning and note especially the 75-day overdue bill for 6 navy rayon robes, size 38, @ \$15 and 6 wine rayon polka dot print robes, size 36, @ \$12.50 (\$165) which you owe us. As a good businessman you probably don't hesitate to extend credit to those customers who pay; but you hesitate when they fail to come through. And you, too, realize the importance of keeping your slate clean. Send us a check for \$165 and keep your slate clean." Unfortunately, Mr. Wade ignored this letter too. So now, when the account is 90 days overdue, you are to write the final letter. As a member of the National Wholesale Credit Association you must report accounts delinquent for 90 days or longer. You'll not report him for 10 days; but he must send a check by then for his own good. Point out what he gains by paying, so that what he loses by not paying is clearly established.
16. You are manager of the credit department of the Hansen and Hansen Manufacturing Company, Salt Lake City, Utah. Write a collection letter to M. D. Tuttle, East Prairie Street, Eureka, Utah, who bought a \$279 refrigerator (Cold-Speck) three months ago. Mr. Tuttle agreed to pay for the refrigerator on a 90-day account when he received his

salary check. He has failed to pay anything on the debt, despite two notifications and a letter. His monthly salary is \$500.

17. As collection manager, Personal Finance Company, your city, you have a debtor—Hugh T. Patterson, 6579 Main Street, a machinist in a local factory. He borrowed \$50 from you to be repaid \$5 a week. He missed two payments and a third is two days overdue. *Action in case:* Letter telling him you are going to get a judgment in court—then you will serve notice of garnishment on his employer, who must deduct the amount from Patterson's wages and pay it to you.
18. *Collector:* Dr. P. M. Fowler, dentist, 189 Church Street, Bismarck, North Dakota. *Debtor:* Mr. Milton McCall, 98 Country Club, same town. *Case:* Dr. sent several bills to McCall for service given during preceding six months. No payment or explanation. McCall is office manager in large insurance office in Bismarck. No reason why payment should be withheld. The McCall's own their home and are members of the country club.
19. *Collector:* Broadway magazine, 140 East 57th Street, New York 22, New York. *Debtor:* Mr. William B. Morris, 897 Parkway, your city. Good credit rating. *Case:* Agreed to pay \$10 on receipt of bill for his subscription. You sent notification, one routine reminder, and two form letters without result. The amount due is now almost 90 days old. Subscription will have to be canceled if payment is not made in ten days. Write a letter that will collect the \$10 and still retain his friendship.
20. *Collector:* Owen and Owen, 978 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, publishers of city directories. *Debtor:* The Reading Nook, 986 Lamar Street, Chicago. *Case:* \$889 owed. Month late in payment for advertising. Bills for advertisements are payable upon publication of the book. Large sums of money have to be invested before any returns come in—for material, editorial work, labor. To pay for these costs, you have to borrow from the bank and the terms of the loan are based on assumption that your advertisers will pay promptly.
21. *Collector:* Peers Loebuck, Atlanta, Georgia. *Debtor:* Roger B. Buck, Rural Route 5, Athens, Georgia. *Case:* Bought automatic milker, \$169.95, mail-order house, Atlanta, on Easy Payment Plan. Paid \$5 down. Payments amount to \$15 a month. He paid three monthly installments; and fourth is now 15 days past due.
22. For any business with which you are familiar, write a four-letter, form collection series the firm could use at 30-day intervals. Assume that a notification and a reminder (which you need not prepare and submit) precede the first letter and that the last letter informs the reader that his account will be placed in the hands of some other agency for collection within a stipulated time. You may assume also that a

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return-addressed envelope accompanies each letter. The amount due can be typed in a double space below the last line.

23. *Creditor:* Texas Equipment and Supply Company, Dallas. *Debtor:* Mr. Chandler Campbell, owner, Longhorn Restaurant, University Avenue, Austin, Texas. *Case:* Campbell owns building, home, and 3,000 acre ranch. Converted restaurant into cafeteria style. Bought 1 Hobart Dishwasher Model AMA, \$1,350.00; 1 Scotsman Ice Maker SF-75 WSF 200 size, \$749; and 1 Refrigerator Model RA-408 Victory Sta-Kold, \$735. Tax and shipping charges \$40. Total, \$2,874. Installation included in price. Equipment to be paid for in 60 days. Sent routine notification on due date. No reply. Thirty days later sent friendly request with resale on goods and sales talk on the new Giant coffee maker. Received \$800 check and promise of more money in 30 days. *Action:* Thank Mr. Campbell for check. Touch on resale on modern equipment. Name date when you expect check for balance of \$2,074.
24. It is now 45 days since you last wrote Mr. Campbell of the preceding case. You have received no check or letter of explanation. Now write, outlining definite payment plan requiring payment immediately of \$800 and 6 per cent notes dated 30, 60, and 90 days ahead. Then, assuming the account of Mr. Campbell is 90 days overdue, over the signature of Robert S. Slade, president, write a letter explaining that he must pay or face the consequences of meeting your attorney in court. Stress what he keeps for himself by paying voluntarily. Give him 10 days more in which to reply. (Two letters.)
25. As instructed by your teacher, assume that the letter for any one of the sales problems has been successful, that several of the buyers have not paid, and that the seller wants a series of four collections to bring in the money. According to your instructor's directions, write all four or any one of the stage(s) to be specified.
26. *Creditor:* The hospital in your city. You are credit manager. *Debtor:* J. P. Bowers, painter, 1654 Pine Street. Out of work two months. Wife. Four children. \$4,000 annual income usually. Owes \$70. A few days after his dismissal from the hospital you sent a routine form notification. Receiving no response from Mr. Bowers in 15 days after your first communication, write a follow-up. Stress value of a good credit rating. Hospital is an institution of mercy.
27. Under name of hospital administrator write letter of inquiry to Mr. Bowers of the preceding case asking if anything is wrong, if there is any reason he has not paid. Ask him to send \$70 or come in and make arrangements for paying. Over a month has passed since he was dismissed.

28. Almost two months have elapsed, and still no word from Mr. Bowers (see preceding case). Give him 10 days in which to send or bring in some money on his \$70 account and make a definite arrangement for full settlement. After that time your attorney, Ralph G. Monroe, will take over.
29. For Ralph G. Monroe, the hospital's attorney (see the three preceding cases) write a letter telling J. P. Bowers that his 10 days were up sometime ago, but if he brings in the \$70, or even \$25, he can avoid court costs and the embarrassment of having his wages garnished. He was dismissed from the hospital almost 90 days ago. There is still time to save his credit reputation.
30. *Creditor:* Mr. James T. Willmon, credit manager, Red Duck Shoe Company, St. Louis, Missouri. *Debtor:* Mr. John E. Swift, owner, Central Shoe Store, Bloomington, Indiana, an old customer. *Case:* Swift received 3 dozen men's insulated rubber pack boots (wholesale \$7.95, retail \$10.95), 1 dozen each in sizes 10, 11, and 12; 3 dozen sizes 10, 11, 12 men's rubber boots with 10-inch zipper opening (wholesale \$3.95, retail \$4.95). Swift has been ordering from you off and on for five years. He pays the same way. The account is 30 days past due. Stress the value of a prompt-pay rating. Sales talk on heavyweight rib-knit socks. Three pairs for \$2.
31. Forty-five days have passed since you wrote Mr. Swift (preceding case). Show him the advantages of a sure-pay rating. Resale on boots.
32. Now it is 80 days after the due date of Mr. Swift's account (see the two preceding). Write a forceful letter pointing out the value of his credit rating that he worked hard to earn—what it does for him—why he needs it.
33. When Mr. Swift's account (see the three preceding cases) is 120 days overdue, write him that he must pay or face the consequences. His name will be reported to the National Manufacturers Credit Association. He has 10 days in which to answer. Stress what he keeps for himself by paying.
34. *Creditor:* Playskool, New York 9, New York. *Debtor:* The Toy Shop, Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania. Owner, Mr. John Green. New customer. *Case:* Two months ago, the Toy Shop bought from you 2 dozen (J-5403) Playskool building sets (retail \$4.50, wholesale \$2); 2 dozen (J-5417) Playskool nok-out bench (retail \$2, wholesale \$1); 2 dozen take-apart workbench (J-5436) (retail \$2, wholesale \$1). Add \$9.10 for taxes and postage. Terms are 2/10, n/30. You sent a discount reminder and on the due date a routine notification, both ignored. Write him a mild early-stage letter designed to get the money but keep good will and build sales.

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35. *Creditor:* McMillen Machine Company, San Francisco, California. *Debtor:* Jones and Spencer, 896 Lamar Street, San Diego, a new customer. *Case:* Four months ago Jones and Spencer ordered several parts of machinery amounting to \$340. Terms 2/10, net 60. You sent four letters over the last 10 weeks. Account remains unpaid. Write letter saying you will draw a sight draft unless check is in your hands within 10 days.
36. *Creditor:* Johnson and Thomson, 190 Parkview Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Electrical supply dealer. *Debtor:* King Curry, 900 Maple Street, Oklahoma City. Owns electric shop. Old customer. *Case:* Owes \$500. Due 30 days ago. Curry disregarded statements and printed reminders. Credit rating is good. Your salesman reports that Curry's business has been affected seriously by the presence of a discount house across the street. Write the first letter.
37. *Creditor:* Merck-Shoop Drug Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *Debtor:* H. and W. Drug Store, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Old customer. *Case:* \$201 owed six months. Write a fifth and final letter making it clear that you are going to report account to the credit bureau of your trade association in 10 days. What will this mean to debtor? Make sure he understands.
38. *Creditor:* Dawson and Wicoff Jewelry Supply House, Columbus, Ohio. *Debtor:* Park Jewelry Store. Owner W. D. Park, Mansfield, Ohio. Fair risk. Old customer. *Case:* Park owes \$110, now a month past due. Assume it is April 1. He has not responded to three statements you have sent him. Write a letter built around the theme that it will soon be time to place an order for the graduation season. He should clear his account for heavier buying.

## **Part Four**

# **THE JOB-FINDING PROCESS**



# XI. Evaluating Yourself and Business Firms

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Analyzing Yourself  
Surveying Work Opportunities  
Analyzing Companies  
Fitting Your Qualifications to Job Requisites  
    The Right Work Attitude  
    Specific Adaptation of Personal Qualities  
    Enhancing Your Training  
    Making the Most of Experience  
    Determining a Favorable Order of Presentation

UNLESS YOU ARE an extremely fortunate person, sometime in your life you will very likely write letters which help you get work: summer jobs, jobs launching a career when you graduate from some institution of learning, a change of jobs for more money, for a better location, for work that has greater appeal to you—and even jobs for retirement or widowhood days (maybe dictated by necessity or possibly because you need to keep busy).

Rare is the individual who does not have to ask for work at some stage in his life—and rare is the individual who does not change jobs several times in his life.

And even if you never write such a letter, the assurance and confidence from realizing what you could do if you had to are good equipment for successful living. Too, from a practical standpoint, the experience of job analyzing is desirable preparation for interviewing—an inevitable part of the procedure even when job-seeking is exclusively oral.

As in sales, when you seek work, you are simply marketing a product: you and what you can do. You market that product to some prospect: business firms which can use your services. In some cases those firms make their needs known—through advertisements, word-of-mouth, placement agencies, or recruiting personnel (“talent scouts,” many big firms call them). In these circumstances, the application is invited. In other cases, firms do not make their needs known; so it’s a case of selling your services to someone who has

given little or no thought to your proposition—a straight case of prospecting. You'll find, then, that most job-getting letters you ever write will be directly comparable to either the prospecting sales letter (a C-plan letter) or the invited sales letter (an A-plan letter). Both must convince someone of your ability to do something (either now or after some training); the big difference between the two is in the approach.

If you are content to accept what life (and your family and possibly a few interested friends) doles out to you, you will probably never write anything but an invited application letter—indeed, you will probably never write a letter seeking employment! But we assume that you would not be reading this chapter if you were not trying to improve yourself. For that reason and others listed below, we believe we can help you more by beginning this analysis with the prospecting letter.

The prospecting application is the logical first choice for training you to write applications, because you will write better applications of any type as a result of thorough analysis and writing of that kind. Moreover, in real-life applications the prospecting letter has these advantages over the invited:

- You have a greater choice of companies and locations.
- You have a chance to be considered for jobs that are often not advertised.
- You can sometimes create a job for yourself where none existed before.
- You don't have as much competition as for an advertised job, sometimes no competition.
- Often it is the only way for you to get the exact kind of work you want to do.
- You can pave the way for a better job a few years later after having gained some experience.

It goes without saying that you need to know what kind of work you want to do before you ask someone to let you do it. You may now know exactly what you want to do—that's fine! Business is looking for the person who knows where he's going. Then you can skip the discussion, "Surveying Work Opportunities," which follows later. You may know exactly the company where you will seek employment and be thoroughly familiar with its products, operations, and policies. Then you won't need to spend as much time as some other folks will in research on your firm, as suggested under "Analyzing Companies."

But if you don't know for sure what you are going to do or for whom you want to work, the following few pages will help you in arriving at this important decision.

And even if you think you know, you will profit from reading—and maybe revising your present plans. Life holds many changes, occupational as well as personal. Many a job plum turns out to be a lemon. One's goals at thirty or forty are often in sharp contrast to those one had at twenty or twenty-five. Sometimes changes come through economic necessity, sometimes because of health reasons, sometimes because of changes in personal situations (one's marital and family status), sometimes because of shifts in demand for a product or service (the prosperous livery-stable owner in 1900 was no longer prosperous by 1910 and was no longer in business by 1920)—for so many reasons, in fact, that it is folly to try to list them all. For you, probably the most significant reason will be your ambition to get ahead: to earn the right to assume more responsibility in work that is challenging and interesting and thus merit respect and prestige in the eyes of other people, with consequent increased financial returns.

The starting point in your thinking and planning, in any case, is yourself.

### Analyzing Yourself

If you are going to sell your services to someone, you will do so on the basis of *what you can do*. That is your marketable product, so to speak, and it deserves the same kind of careful analysis as launching any product does. The training you have (or will have had by the time you apply for work), the experience you've had (which is not so important in many instances as college students assume it to be), and your personal attitudes and attributes are your qualifications which enable you to do something for someone.

Of the three, attitudes and attributes may be the most important:

If you don't like a particular kind of work, you probably won't be successful in it.

Of all the surveys of why people lose jobs, none has ever cited less than 80 per cent attributable to personal maladjustments rather than professional deficiency.

No one but you can decide whether you will like a particular kind of job or not. Your like or dislike will be governed by such general considerations as whether you like to lead or to follow, whether you are an extrovert or an introvert, whether you prefer to work with products and things rather than with people, whether you are content to be confined indoors all your working hours or must get out and move around some of the time or all the time, whether you want to work primarily for money or whether prestige—social and professional respect—and greater security can partially compensate for less money. Certain kinds of work call for much traveling, after-

work-hours entertaining, frequent contact with strangers, staying "dressed up" and "on call" physically and mentally; other kinds are just the opposite.

For most readers of this book, training is already a matter of record or will be in the very near future. In some college or university you are laying a foundation of courses pointing to job performance in some selected field: accounting, statistics, law, secretarial work, finance, transportation, marketing, engineering, agriculture, or management. While graduation is a certification of meeting certain time and proficiency standards, the individual courses and projects have taught you to do something and have shown you how to reason with judgment so that you can develop on the job. Unless you intend to forfeit much of the value of your training (which for most people who go through college represents an investment of \$10,000-\$20,000), you will want to find work in the field of your major preparation. That decision is partially or completely made for you.

Experience, likewise, is already partially a matter of record; you've held certain jobs or you haven't. Between now and the time you graduate you may gain some experience during summers or part time during the school term. If you do, that's good; any experience is better than none. Most employers look with greater favor on the person who has already demonstrated some workmanlike habits and exhibited enough drive to work and earn than they do on the person who has held no jobs. But if you've never earned a dime, don't think your position is bleak or unique. Much of your extracurricular activity is the equivalent of work experience in the eyes of employers—and in some cases it is even more desirable than job experience. Many employers prefer a less experienced person with vision and judgment than some experienced plodder with none. And, as you know, many employers prefer to give their employees their own brand of experience in training programs. Regardless of your status, when in an application you show that you understand the requirements for the job, you have an effective substitute for experience. Furthermore, if you will discard the kind of thinking that brands your training as "theoretical" or "academic," you will begin to realize that it is as down-to-earth as it can be. And that is true whether that training is in cost accounting or is a study of man and his environment.

But since you may still need to come to a vocational decision, because your training may be applied in many different lines of business or industry with equal effectiveness and because you probably don't know as much about your chosen line of work as you could with profit (most folks don't), you'll do well to do some research.

To get an idea—or perhaps a better idea than you now have—you may want to read a description of job requisites and rewards con-

cerning the kind of work you are considering. Publications like *Occupational Briefs*, Nos. 1-200, and other job-outlook pamphlets published by Science Research Associates (57 West Grand Avenue, Chicago 10, Illinois) and the publication *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, put out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics assisted by the Veterans Administration, will help you. If you check in *Readers' Guide, Applied Science & Technology Index* and *Business Periodicals Index* (formerly *Industrial Arts Index*), or *Public Affairs Information Service* under the subject heading of the vocation you have chosen or are contemplating, you may find leads to more recent publications.

If you are in genuine confusion over your job choice and have not already done so, you may want to consult some guidance agency for tests and counseling. Most institutions of higher learning have facilities for testing intelligence, aptitude, and vocational interest; so do U.S. Employment Service offices and Veterans Administration offices. And in practically any major city you can find a private agency which, for a fee, will help you in this way. Reading and talking with other people can help you, but only you can make the choice.

Having chosen the particular kind of work you want to do, you will be wise to make an organized search for those who can use your services.

### **Surveying Work Opportunities**

If you are dead sure that you have chosen the right kind of work and the right organization, that the firm of your choice will hire you, and that both of you will be happy ever after in the arrangement, then this discussion is not for you.

Most job seekers, however, are better off to keep abreast of current developments as signs of potential trends in lines of employment and specific companies.

The publications of Science Research Associates (already referred to) give you business and employment trends that help you decide whether you are going to have much or little competition in a given line of work for jobs (as well as what is expected from you and how far approximately you can expect to go). The annual Market Data and Directory number of *Industrial Marketing* and Standard and Poor's Industry Surveys analyze major industries, with comments on their current position in the economy (the latter also identifies outstanding firms in each field). The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (U.S. Employment Service) and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* help you to keep informed on vocational needs. The special reports on individual fields which *Fortune* and the *Wall Street Journal* run from time to time are helpful also. And study of trade journals devoted to the interests of the field(s) in which you are interested can

be highly rewarding in helping you to decide on a given kind of work.

Once that decision is made—and confirmed—you seek names of specific organizations which could use your services. You can find names of companies in *Career, The Annual Guide to Business Opportunities* (published by Career Publications, Incorporated, Cincinnati and New York), *The College Placement Annual*, Standard and Poor's *Manuals*, and Moody's *Manuals*. Trade directories are useful. If you are concerned with staying in a given location, the city directory—or even the classified section of the phone book—will be helpful. Even if there is no city directory, the local chamber of commerce can help you.

You are by no means confined to manuals and directories, however. If you are on the alert and are willing to spend a little time, you can assemble a good list of prospects from reading business newspapers and magazines. When significant changes occur within a company—for example, a new plant, an addition to an already existing structure, a new product launched, a new research program instituted, a new or different advertising or distribution plan announced—some newspaper or magazine reports that information. Widely known and readily available sources of such information are the *Wall Street Journal* and the business section of an outstanding newspaper in the region of your interest (the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Daily News*, the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Dallas Morning News*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *Birmingham News*, the *Atlanta Constitution* are examples). *U.S. News & World Report* and *Business Week* (in their blue and yellow pages) give you outstanding developments; *Printers' Ink* in its "What's News . . . and Why" summarizes what is happening in marketing. From such reading you can assemble a list of companies, the nature of each business, the location, and sometimes the names of key personnel.

Many companies distribute pamphlets dealing with employment opportunities with the company and qualifications for them; all you have to do is write for one. Sears, Roebuck and Company, American Telephone and Telegraph, Container Corporation of America, and General Electric are only four of the hundreds of companies which publish such information and make it available to placement bureaus, libraries, individuals—anyone who asks.

You can easily assemble a substantial list of firms which, either by outright statement or by implication from some event, could be considered prospects for your services. If from your reading you do not get the address or the name of the key individual you think you should write to, you can usually get the address from one of the manuals or directories already referred to. If it is a corporation you're interested in, frequently you can get a copy of its annual report from

a business library in your locality. If not, you can get one by writing for it. The report will also often identify key personnel, one of whom may be the man you should direct your letter to.

Certainly, other people can also be a help to you. Teachers in the field of your interest and business people doing the same thing you want to do can make many good suggestions about qualifications, working conditions, opportunities, and business firms. Before taking their time, however, you certainly should do some investigating on your own.

### Analyzing Companies

The more you can find out about the organization to which you write an application letter, the better qualified you'll be to talk concretely about how your preparation fits the company's needs. And remember, that's what you have to do in a successful application—show that you can render service which fits the company's need. For that matter, even if you are fortunate enough to have an interview or a series of interviews arranged for you, you'll want to find out all you can about the company: its history, operations, policies, financial structure, position in the industry—even its main competitors.

Probably the best source of such information—and certainly the easiest for you to obtain—is its annual report. Not all companies issue annual reports; however, any company which is listed on the Stock Exchange is required by law to account to the stockholders for its handling of funds at least once a year. And most annual reports contain much more than financial information; their intended readership includes stockholders, employees, customers, sources of supply—almost anyone, in fact. So they summarize the year's over-all activities in terms of products, employment, sales, stockholders, management conditions affecting the industry and the company (including governmental activities), and a wide range of other topics, as well as present the latest balance sheets and income statements. Careful reading of the last five years' annual reports makes you well informed on the company (much more than many of the employees on its payroll).

Standard and Poor's *Manuals* and Moody's *Manuals* summarize the history, operations (including products or services, number of employees, number of plants), and financial structure.

If you can't find the needed information in sources like these, you may be lucky enough to find it in some magazine. *Fortune*, for example, has published many extensive résumés about specific companies. *Time* does regularly. Indexes—*Readers' Guide*, *Applied Science and Technology*, *Business Periodicals*, *Public Affairs Information Service*—may show you where you can find such an article.

From whatever source you can find, learn as much as you can about what the company does, how it markets its products or services,

the trends at work for and against it, its financial position, its employment record, what kind of employees it needs and what it requires of them—plus anything else you can.

### Fitting Your Qualifications to Job Requisites

Simply put, what you are doing when you analyze yourself in terms of a job is running two columns of answers:

#### What Do They Want? What Do I Have?

And, simply put, the answers to both those questions lie in three categories: personal attitudes and attributes, training, and experience—but not necessarily in that order of presentation! In fact, as explained in greater detail in the section, “Compiling the Data Sheet,” which follows, you will usually put yourself in a more favorable light if you follow an order emphasizing your most favorable qualification in the light of job requirements. That is rarely little personal details like age, weight, and height. But desirable attitudes and personal traits and habits are basic equipment in *any* employee (and for writing a good application). Without them, no amount of training and/or experience will enable you to hold a job, even if you are lucky enough to get it.

***The Right Work Attitude.*** Someone puts you on a payroll because you give evidence of being able to perform some useful service for him. That means work. The simplest, easiest, and most effective way to think about, talk about, and write about work is in terms of doing something for someone. The only way you'll convince someone that you can do something for him—better than someone else can—is first to realize that you're going to have to be able and willing to produce; that hard work is honorable; that recognition in the form of more pay, more benefits, and flexible hours comes only after demonstrated ability; that you have to be as concerned with *giving* as you are with *getting* (and preferably more so) and that you have to give more than you get, especially at first; that you know you can learn more than you already know, and are willing to in order to grow on the job; and that glibness does not cover incompetence or poor work habits—not for very long, at any rate.

The only way you earn the right to stay on a payroll is to give an honest day's work and to give it ungrudgingly. That means punctuality, reliability, honesty, willingness, cheerfulness, and co-operative-ness.

Of course, it means competence, too. But, without a desirable outlook toward work and the conditions under which it must be carried on, competence can be a secondary consideration. Before you can ever demonstrate competence, you have to gain the approval of other people (if you don't, they'll never admit your competence). You can

be good; but if you don't get along well with people, your superior abilities won't be recognized. Even if recognized, they won't be rewarded.

You can be very good, but if you indicate that you think you are, you're going to be marked down as vain and pompous. One of the most frequent criticisms of college graduates is that they have over-inflated ideas of their worth. Of course, if you don't respect your own abilities, someone else is not likely to either. But the oft-quoted "Silver notes never come from a brass horn" is something to remember for living in general and applications in particular. The best answer to the problem is your recognition that you can do something because you've prepared yourself to do it, that you have the right mental attitude for doing it under normal business conditions, that you believe you can do it, and that you want to.

Confidence in yourself is essential, but so are humility and modesty. You can achieve a successful blend if you imply both in a specific interpretation of how your training and experience equip you to perform job duties.

***Specific Adaptation of Personal Qualities.*** The work-for-you attitude in an adaptation implying confidence is basic in any application. Other attitudes or personal qualities need to be evaluated in the light of the particular circumstance. Affability, for instance, is highly desirable for work in which a person deals primarily with people (sales work, for example); it is not so significant in the makeup of an actuarial statistician or a corporation accountant. Accuracy is more to the point for them, as it is for architects and mechanical engineers. Punctuality, while desirable in all things and people, is more necessary for a public accountant than for a personnel worker; for him patience is more to be desired. While a salesman needs to be cheerful, a sales analyst must be endowed with perseverance (though each needs a measure of both). A young woman asking to be a medical secretary would stress accuracy in technique but, equally, poise and naturalness in putting people at ease; were she applying as a technician, accuracy would be the primary consideration, probably to the exclusion of the other two. Certainly in any position involving responsibility, the candidate for the job would want to select details from his experience which would bear out the necessary personal virtues of honesty as well as accuracy.

While all virtues are desirable—and truth, honor, trustworthiness, cheerfulness are expected in most employees—a virtue in one circumstance may be an undesirable characteristic in another. Talkativeness, for example, is desirable for an interviewer seeking consumer reaction; the same talkativeness would be most undesirable in a credit investigator (who also does a considerable amount of interviewing). Both would need to inspire confidence.

In any application analysis, estimate what you think are the two or three most important personal characteristics and plan to incorporate evidence which will imply your possession of them. The others are then likely to be assumed. You can't successfully establish all the desirable ones. Besides, you have to show that your training and experience are adequate in selling yourself to a potential employer.

**Enhancing Your Training.** With the desirable work-for-you attitude, you'll think in terms of job performance. If your reading has not given you a good idea of some duties you would be expected to perform on a particular job, you'll profitably spend some time talking with someone who has done the work and can tell you. You cannot hope to anticipate everything you might be called upon to do on a given job (nor would you want to talk about everything in your application); but if you anticipate some of the major job requirements and write about your studies in a way that shows you meet these requirements, you'll have enough material for conviction.

Though a specified level of academic attainment is often stipulated (college graduate, completion of at least two years of college, high-school graduate), for most jobs the academic units of credit and the diploma are not what enables you to perform a useful service. What you learned in earning them does. To satisfy the arbitrary requirement when you apply to some firms, you'll need to establish your graduation (or the completion of as much work as you have done). But the primary emphasis in your presentation and therefore in your analysis and evaluation needs to go on those phases of your training which most directly and specifically equip you for the work under consideration. In planning your application (but not in writing it) you'll need to list, as specifically as you can, job duties that you can be reasonably sure you'll be called upon to perform and, in a parallel column, the training that gives evidence of your ability to do them.

An applicant for work in a public accounting firm knows that he is going to be expected to analyze financial data, prepare working papers, assemble financial statements, and present a report with interpretive comments. The direct evidence of his having learned to do these things is his experience in having done those same things in advanced accounting courses and/or work experience. He must also communicate intelligibly and easily his findings to his clients; and as evidence of his ability to do so, he cites training in report writing (and letter writing) as well as in speech. If he assumes that pleasant relations with clients are a desirable point to stress, he may cite training in psychology and sociology. In helping his clients to evaluate the significance of what the accountant discovers, he may draw on his knowledge of law and statistics.

A secretarial applicant writes about her dictation performance as evidence of her ability to record her employer's ideas; as evidence of

her ability to reproduce them rapidly in attractive letters, memos, or reports, she writes in terms of transcription performance. She enhances her value when she talks in terms of relieving this busy employer of much of his routine correspondence as a result of her training in business writing. Since she can be reasonably sure of having to handle callers both face to face and on the telephone, she cites her training in speech and in office procedures.

If you are interested in selling as a career, your specific training in salesmanship (both oral and written), market analysis and research, advertising principles and practice, and report writing need to be stressed (along with any other specifically desirable preparation that you know about).

Likewise, the management major stresses training in principles, industrial management, and personnel selection and placement. And if he is particularly interested in industrial relations, he will focus on training in industrial management, motion and time study, and labor economics, law, and legislation.

In all instances, applicants need to be selective, concentrating on that training which most nearly reflects the most advanced stage of preparation. For example, the successful completion of an auditing course certainly implies training in beginning and intermediate principles of accounting. Likewise, a person who cites evidence of training in market analysis and research will certainly have had training in marketing principles. The careful selection of the most applicable courses precludes the necessity for listing qualifying courses and thus enables you to place desirable emphasis on the most significant.

***Making the Most of Experience.*** Any job you've ever held that required you to perform some task, be responsible for the successful completion of a project, oversee and account for the activities of other people, influence the actions of others, or handle money is an activity that you can cite with pride to a prospective employer. You may not have been paid for it; that doesn't matter a lot. The college man who directs his campus unit of the community chest drive gets a workout in organization, delegation of authority, persuasion, systemization, persistence, punctuality, responsibility, and honesty and accuracy that is good work experience. It is experience which is more valuable than that of the student who mans a cash register at the local supermarket four hours a day—and nothing else. Especially if both men are aiming at managerial work or some kind of contact work, the man who has earned no pay but has had more experience working with people and assuming authority and responsibility is in a more desirable position.

You may not have held the job for any length of time—maybe for only a summer or over the holidays or briefly part time while in

school. But didn't you learn something that increased your ability to render service?

You may have held a job that does not appear to be related to the work you hope to do. The checker at the supermarket, for example, because of financial necessity, has punched his way through college because that is the only way he could prepare for a career in marketing. But haven't his vision and stickability been demonstrated? Hasn't he learned and demonstrated accuracy, the ability to work under pressure, the willingness to be cheerful and polite to customers? And if he has kept his eyes open, he has had a good workout in interpreting consumer demand.

Even the person of limited experience can interpret that experience in an adaptation to job requirements, giving the most significant experience the emphasis of position. The most directly related phase of experience is the one most nearly preparing you to do something. For example, if the supermarket checker had also been a fraternity-house treasurer (involving handling and accounting for money), in an application for accounting work he would want to emphasize the treasurer's duties over the checker's job; were he seeking to do selling, the checker's job would be more significant.

If you are fortunate enough to have a wide range of experience, then your problem is simply one of picking and choosing and presenting in an order of descending applicability to the job sought. Chronology (a time sequence) rarely should be your governing choice at graduation or even for a few years after. As an experienced employee changing companies, you may wisely elect to present job experience in a chronological order (or the reverse), emphasizing progress to the present state of preparation; such order-of-time presentation suggests a well-defined goal and success in attaining it. Few college people are in that position, however.

Whatever experience you elect to present, you want to show as directly and specifically as possible that, as a result of this experience, you come equipped to do or at least to learn how quickly. The surest way to present this information about yourself in the most favorable light is to describe job duties that you have done in line with what you have found out you will be expected to do in the job you're asking for. You will strengthen your application if you interpret the experience to show what it taught you about important principles, techniques, and attitudes applicable in the hoped-for job. Evaluating work experience is the same process as evaluating training; it's the matching up as far as possible the answers to *What Do I Have?* with the requirements under *What Do They Want?*

You will rarely, if ever, meet all job requirements, and you will always have some points that are stronger than others. Outright lack of a specific point of preparation or below-average standard are nega-

tive points to be handled in the same manner that any writer handles them: embedded position and positive language.

**Determining a Favorable Order of Presentation.** After you have listed the necessary and the desirable equipment of the person who will be hired and your own specific preparation as defined by personal qualities, training, and experience, you will then need to decide on an order of presentation that is most favorable to you.

Most jobs are secured in the first place because of the employee's competence, not his personal charm or good looks. While undesirable personal attributes and attitudes can keep you from getting the job of your choice (sometimes from getting *a* job!) and may result in your losing the job even if you fool someone and are selected, good personality will not ordinarily get you the job unless you first show ability to do the work. Competence stems from good training or worthwhile experience, or a combination of the two.

If your strongest point is thorough training, that is what you want to start with; if it is experience, begin that way. And within each of these categories, arrange your qualifications so that the best comes first (as any good salesman does).

Without telling your reader what they are, as if he didn't know, be sure to give evidence that you meet all important job requirements. And write up your evidence not in the order it occurs to you or even in an order of what you estimate is of greatest significance in the evaluation but in an order that stresses your strong points.

For this comprehensive presentation, a data sheet is the preferred form.

## XII. Letters about Employment

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Compiling the Data Sheet

Writing the Prospecting Application

Securing Favorable Attention

Supplying Evidence of Performance Ability

Overcoming Deficiencies

Talking the Special Language

The Undesirability of Emphasizing Analysis instead of Qualifications

Asking for Appropriate Action

Writing the Invited Application

Continuing the Campaign

Follow-Up Letters

Thank-You Letters

Job-Acceptance Letters

Job-Refusing Letters

Letters of Resignation

Two Useful Modifications of Applications

The Job-Anticipating Letter

The Telescopied Application Inquiry

### Compiling the Data Sheet

As one authority said, a data sheet gives your life's history in two minutes, indicates your organizing and language ability, and leaves your letter free to sell.

Whether you call it a data sheet, a qualification sheet, a résumé, or a personal profile, to most readers it means the same basic coverage. Some use the term *résumé* to mean only a summary of jobs held and *personal profile* to mean only personal details. It is pointless to quibble over terminology. The thing for you to remember is that the summary is a tabulation of your qualifications, giving pertinent, specific details concerning your training, experience, and personal data and—except in atypical circumstances—supplying the names of references who can verify what you say about yourself.

We know that company employment forms conventionally ask for personal information first. That practice is partially dictated by custom, partially by the desire for a chronological look at the appli-

cant, and partially by the wish of some prospective employers to have a clear-cut picture of the applicant from the start: such information as physical specifications, age, and marital status. Important as this information is, it is not what gets you a job. When you are preparing your own data sheet, you want to sell yourself. Remember that the company isn't trying to sell you, but you are! You will sell yourself more by emphasizing initially your best point of preparation—either training or experience details, followed by the other. In most cases you have a stronger presentation by establishing these significant details before you take up the necessary personal information. You can use space that would otherwise be wasted and include some personal description at the outset, if for no other reason than that many people expect it. Certainly the following illustration gets off to a good start and uses space economically and in attractive layout.

But we think the three data sheets which follow do a better job of establishing these personal details as well as additional significant ones. And they desirably emphasize each candidate's strongest selling point.

You may choose to omit references if you are prospecting or if you are answering a "blind" (anonymous) advertisement and fear the effects of an inquiry at the firm where you are working at the time. Or you may not want to ask references to take time to answer inquiries until you know for sure that you are interested in the job. In either case, you would need to indicate the willingness to supply the names of references upon request or after an interview; the evaluation by those who have supervised you in classrooms and on jobs is of real use to the people who consider employing you.

In most cases—and always for college students seeking a career—the names of references to whom the potential employer can write are a necessary part of data-sheet information. Logically, they conclude the presentation.

Since the data sheet must carry a wealth of detail and condense the material into a small amount of space, it follows good outlining principles and form. You need to capitalize on the space-saving devices of tabulation and noun phrases (rather than sentences and conventional paragraphs). To facilitate rapid reading, you should use headings, differentiate in type for the various classes of information, and observe uniform indentations for rows and columns of information. Parallel construction in phrasing requires special care. (If you stick to noun phrases, you'll eliminate your problems in this respect.)

The data sheet is usually written in impersonal style. For that reason, opinions and comments rarely appear on one.

The best form is that one which enables you to make a favorable presentation of your qualifications, attractively displayed and con-

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cisely stated. Study thoughtfully the three examples beginning on page 403. You'll note the variation in the use of rows and columns of information, in the type and placement of information, in the classification of the information, and in the points the writers stressed.

Jayne C. Bowen's Qualifications for Secretarial Work with Standard Oil Company	Appropriate	Age, 20 Height, 5' 3" Weight, 118 Hair, black; eyes, blue; skin, fair Religion, Methodist Single Born in Louisiana English-French parents
209 Harcourt Place New Iberia, Louisiana Phone: 75 5-6977	Picture	(Detachable)

One is as good as the others; they all did the job for the people who used them.

Your data sheet should preferably be typed. When you type each presentation, you can desirably fill in the name of the organization to

JOHN DAYTON HALE'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR

ACCOUNTING WORK WITH PHILCO RADIO CORPORATION

(Address: 4030 Sixth Street, Port Arthur, Texas)

Professional College Training

Three uninterrupted years' study summer and winter (1959-62) in The University of Texas majoring in accounting; BBA degree, August, 1962, with better than a "B" average.

Courses pointing to a thorough understanding of corporation accounting and financial analysis:

-Accounting-

Cost: Job-order and process cost methods.

Federal Income Tax: Reporting taxes for corporations, partnerships, and individuals.

Procedures: Various systems of accounting with emphasis on special items of the balance sheet--Accounts Receivable and Investments.

Auditing: elementary and advanced; public auditing and internal auditing with emphasis on internal control.

Fiduciary: all business units in voluntary or involuntary bankruptcy; also accounting for estates.

Governmental: Accounting for all types of governmental units.

-Related Courses-

Corporation Finance: financial policies; types of corporate securities--when to issue stocks or bonds.

Money and Banking: the theory of money and how the Federal Reserve System is run.

Business Law: contracts, sales, negotiable instruments, corporation, partnerships, and property.

Economics: basic understanding of the various theories.

Written Communications:  
report writing and  
letter writing.

Work Experience Requiring Accuracy

- 1962-- Accountant for D. H. Hicks, General Contractor, Austin, Texas; planning and supervision of accounting system, afternoons and evenings while in school.  
1960-61: Records clerk, Texas Fire Insurance Commission, Austin, Texas; part-time.  
1959-60: Clerk, Police Department, Austin, Texas; part-time in Corporation Court and Identification Bureau.

## 404 COMMUNICATING THROUGH LETTERS AND REPORTS

which it is being presented and make other minor changes for better adaptation. As a practical matter, however, you may have to run off multiple copies. Printed data sheets are preferred over mimeographed ones. Remember, too, that though about half the potential

### JOHN DAYTON HALE'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR ACCOUNTING WORK, PAGE 2

1958-59: Superintendent, Bureau of Identification, Police Department, Port Arthur, Texas (fingerprint expert, detective, photographer, interrogator).  
1957-58: Clerk, Identification Bureau, Police Department, Port Arthur, Texas.  
1956-57: Airman, U.S. Air Force.

#### Personality

Birth date and place:	Organization memberships:
Born in Texas in 1938 of Scotch and Irish descent.	Beta Alpha Psi (accounting, professional and honorary)
Family status:	Kappa Alpha (social)
Married, with a son.	Masonic Lodge
Physical condition:	University Baptist Church
5 feet, 10 inches; 165 pounds; no defects. No absence from work or school due to illness in last four years. Glasses for close work.	Hobbies: Fishing (artificial lure) Swimming (water safety and swimming instructor)

#### References (by Permission)

Dr. C. Aubrey Smith Professor of Accounting The University of Texas Austin, Texas	Chief R. D. Thorp Police Department Austin, Texas
Mr. Frank Graydon Professor of Accounting The University of Texas Austin, Texas	Mrs. Corinne Lundgren Office Manager Texas Fire Insurance Commission Austin, Texas
Mr. Joyce Campbell City Manager Port Arthur, Texas	Mr. D. H. Hicks 1313 Speedway Austin, Texas

employers say they do not object to mimeographed data sheets, half of them do. These statistics do not imply that any potential employer prefers processed data sheets. Some will tolerate them, but an equally significant number will not. Unfortunately, you have no way of guess-

MARIAN CRANE'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR  
EFFICIENT PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK  
WITH SOUTHEASTERN HIGHWAY TRANSPORT, INC.

Address until  
June 1, 1963  
Box 1773  
University, Alabama

-----  
| Conservative |  
| picture in busi- |  
| ness dress. |  
| Front view. |  
(Detachable)

Address after  
June 2, 1963  
Box 47  
Evergreen, Alabama

Thorough College Training

Three and one half years of work in the School of Commerce, University of Alabama, with only five hours of advanced electives left (for completion by correspondence) after June 2, 1963, for a B.S. degree.

'B" average in the following courses related to public-relations work with Southeastern Highway Transport:

Transportation	Business Statistics
Traffic Management	Business Correspondence
Employee Supervision	Business Report Writing
Personnel Management	

The Experience of Working with People

Active participation in these campus organizations:

Beta Beta Alpha--organization for women Business Administration Majors.	Wica--independent women's social organization.
Newman Club--organization for the promotion of religious social activities of Catholic students.	Campus League of Women Voters-- Meetings used for the discussion of current events, trends, interests.

Three and one half years of life in a co-operative house--an organization of sixteen University girls who co-operate to do all the planning, managing, and work of this living unit.

Co-ordinator of this organization during Senior year. Managerial responsibility.	Active member of the Inter-co-op Council, the board representing all co-op houses on the campus. Working on problems of all the houses as a whole and planning a definite expansion program.
Member of the Advisory Committee, with special duties of talking to any member of this co-op who caused any friction within the house.	

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ing correctly which class the reader of your application will fall into. So if you can spare the time (or the money), send typed ones—and never a carbon.

With careful planning and only minor changes, if any, you will be

### MARIAN CRANE'S QUALIFICATIONS--page 2

General office work with Ford Motor  
Company of Evergreen, Alabama.  
Typing, Dictation, Bookkeeping.  
Summers, 1960, 1961, 1962.

Secretary to Representative Stark in  
the Legislature during the last  
session. Spring, 1961.

Office assistant at Radio  
House, University of  
Alabama. General office  
work of typing, dictation,  
mimeographing. Part-time  
while in school.

#### Personal Details

Nativity: Born in 1942 in Alabama

Health: Good. Perfect hearing and  
eyesight.

Family status: Unmarried.

Religious affiliation: Catholic.

Physical characteristics: 5 feet,  
4 inches; 120 pounds; blond hair;  
hazel eyes.

Hobbies: Participation in sports;  
listening to classical music;  
designing and sewing wardrobe.

#### Persons Who Will Testify

Dr. M. W. Whitman  
Professor of Transportation  
University, Alabama

Dr. John Robert Blocton  
Professor of Business Statistics  
University, Alabama

Mr. Layden D. Osmus  
Director of Radio House  
University, Alabama

Mr. D. R. Lanning  
Professor of Marketing  
University, Alabama

Mr. L. A. Jarosek, Manager  
Ford Motor Company  
Evergreen, Alabama

able to use the same data-sheet information over and over as you mail out applications for the same kind of job. Often a simple substitution of company name in the heading is all you'll need to do. When the kind of work you're applying for changes, however, re-evaluate your

Qualifications of Harry E. Adams

for Representing Bedford, Mace, and Company in the Field

Until June 1, 1963

Box 3652  
University, Alabama

After June 1, 1963

Rainbow Drive  
Gadsden, Alabama

Conservative  
picture in a  
business suit.  
Front view.

(Detachable)

College Training and Teaching Experience

Master of Science degree, August, 1963, University of Alabama, with major concentration on economics and labor.

Courses of value in representing a publisher to the college trade  
(in addition to specialization):

Public Speaking	Business Correspondence	Business Research
Psychology	Business Report Writing	Advertising
Marketing	English Composition	Business Law

One year (1962-63) of teaching Economic Principles, University of Alabama.  
Responsibility for planning and delivering lectures and for all testing and grading.

Personal Factors

Appearance: 6 feet tall,  
170 pounds, brown hair and  
eyes, dark skin, conservative  
dress.

Nativity: Born January 24,  
1938, Gadsden, Alabama, of  
Scotch-English parentage.

Military status:  
honorable discharge from  
U.S. Navy after 24 months  
of service.

Memberships:  
Delta Chi social fraternity.  
Baptist Church.

Marital status: single (free to  
travel).

Hobbies: active participation in  
tennis, golf, swimming. Frequent  
bridge and dancing. Wide reading  
of fiction and business publications.

University of Alabama References

Dr. Ralph M. Hill  
Professor of Economics  
University, Alabama

Mr. D. H. Brennan  
Professor of Marketing  
University, Alabama

Dr. R. E. Lampkin  
Professor of Management  
Chairman, Commerce  
Graduate Division  
University, Alabama

Dr. Paul W. Paulings  
Professor of Economics  
University, Alabama

qualifications in the light of the changed circumstances. The last two data sheets shown here would have stressed different aspects of training, had the applicants been applying for work in their majors.

After studying the three examples, review the appended check-listed items (pp. 662-65) as a basis for preparing your own data sheet.

### Writing the Prospecting Application

With a well-prepared data sheet you will have done a good job of lining up your qualifications, of realizing what you can (and can't) do, and of deciding on those phases which most nearly equip you for efficient performance. You are then in much better shape to write a covering sales letter (C-plan, as you know) than before. At times you may want to send a prospecting letter without a data sheet. That's your decision. We don't think it's the better decision if for no other reason than that most of the personnel men we've ever talked with or listened to or whose articles we've read prefer to receive the data-sheet summary. Even if you elect not to use one, you'll write a better letter for having prepared one. Having prepared it, you're throwing good money away if you don't let it work for you.

You're also being very foolish if you fail to capitalize on your investment of time, effort (and maybe even cash) by slavishly following the points and aping the style of another person's application letter. The good "model" application letter doesn't exist—and never will for folks of average intelligence and above. They realize that the application letter must be an accurate reflection of the writer's personality as well as aptitudes. And so they will write their own.

**Securing Favorable Attention.** As in sales letters, the infallible way to secure interest in your application letter is to stress your central selling point in writing about doing something for the reader. Your central selling point may be an ability based on training, experience, or personal qualities or a combination of them. The young man who compiled the last of the data sheets you studied on the preceding pages successfully combined all three:

With my college background of undergraduate and graduate training, my teaching experience, and a temperament which helps me to adapt easily to college people and circumstances, I believe I could do a good job as a field representative for your firm.

And after talking recently about the nature of the work with R. D. Schott, Southern representative for Leath, I know I'd have the added factor in my favor of being very enthusiastic about the work.

While I certainly don't know all the answers to why college teachers choose certain textbooks, I have taught enough while completing a master's degree at Alabama to realize that format and price are only minor factors affecting a teacher's decision when he adopts a book.

Possibly the most significant realization from my year of association with the staff here as a graduate student and instructor is that there is no true "academic" personality—that a successful representative has to be prepared to meet and talk smoothly and convincingly with a very wide range of personalities.

Teaching classes in Economic Problems and Policies, discussing my thesis with committees both collectively and individually, and concrete talk with staff members about teaching problems (in staff meetings and in bull sessions) have helped me to think on my feet, to have self-assurance when speaking to groups and to individuals, and to adapt myself to varying situations. I've learned to feel at home with all types of college teachers.

The fact that I have business training from Alabama rather than liberal arts training from Harvard might actually make me a better representative, Mr. Dayton—especially in the South, which is where I've lived most of my life, which I thoroughly understand and like, and where I should like to serve as your representative. I could work happily in any of your districts, however: I've traveled over most of the United States (and got to Europe and Japan while in the Navy). I realize that the people and the country in other sections are fine too.

I believe you'd find me quick to learn; the men I've listed as references on the enclosed data sheet will probably tell you that if you'll write them.

After you've had a chance to verify some of the things I've said about myself in this letter and on the data sheet, will you write me frankly about the possibilities of working for you?

Possibly I could talk with one of your regional representatives in this area as a preliminary step. And I can plan to come to New York sometime this summer if you'd like to talk with me further about my successfully representing your firm.

(You may be interested to know that this letter was mailed to 22 publishers and brought 22 replies within a couple of weeks. Half a dozen of the firms wanted to interview the writer right away, another half-dozen within a month afterward. He had 4 job offers.)

To get started rapidly and pertinently, one applicant began her letter to the American Red Cross this way:

I can be the versatile type of Club Director the American Red Cross seeks.

As a result of five years' specialized training in dietetics and institutional management and ten years' practical experience in meeting and serving people as a volunteer worker in Service Clubs from New York to Trinidad, from France through Germany, I know the kind of program which will best meet the needs and interests of service men and their families everywhere.

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A young man just graduating from college got favorable attention with this:

Because I have had an unusual five-year educational opportunity combining the fields of engineering and management, I feel sure of my ability to do efficient work in your industrial engineering department and to steadily increase in usefulness if you employed me.

I could conduct a time study with a technical knowledge of the machines concerned or work on the problems of piece wage rates without losing sight of the highly explosive personnel situation involved.

A nineteen-year-old girl with two years of college summarized her outstanding qualifications in the following well-chosen lead:

As a secretary in your export division I could take your dictation at a rapid 120 words per minute and transcribe it accurately in attractive letters and memos at 40 words per minute—whether it is in English or in Spanish.

There's nothing tricky about these openings. They just talk work.

You may be able to capitalize on a trick in some situations—provided that it shows knowledge of job requirements. The young advertising candidate who mailed a walnut to agencies with the lead, "They say advertising is a hard nut to crack," certainly got results from the message he had enclosed in the walnut. The young man who, in seeking radio work, wrote his message in the form of a radio script marked "Approved for Broadcast" and stamped with a facsimile of the usual log certification indicated above-average knowledge of working conditions. The secretary who started her letter with a line of shorthand characters indicated qualifications from the start. The statistical worker who drew at the top of his letter a line graph showing the Federal Reserve Board Index of Industrial Production and in the opening lines of his letter commented on the significance of its recent movements certainly had a head start on other candidates for the job. If you can think of one like these, one which is pertinent, in good taste, and not stereotyped (such as the balance sheet from an accounting candidate), it may help you. But it is by no means a must.

You do need to concentrate on rapidly and naturally establishing your qualifications with the confident assumption that they can be put to work for the reader in some specific job. Having held out such a promise, you need to back it up.

***Supplying Evidence of Performance Ability.*** Your evidence in an application is simply an interpretation of the highlights of your data sheet. For persuasiveness, you phrase it in terms of doing-something-for-you.

The applicant to the Red Cross whose opening you read on a preceding page continued her letter this way:

With the full realization that the Red Cross is operated on a necessarily economical basis, I can use my thorough college training in institutional organization as a sound basis for financial management, cost control, personnel management, employee training, and job specifications, all of which I know are vital in a well-run Red Cross Club.

When it comes to food service I feel equally as much at home in the planning, selection, buying, preparation, and serving of party food for a group of 500 or 1,000 as I do behind the snack bar of a canteen or planning the well-balanced meals for the hard-working Red Cross girls who live in the barracks. During my year's paid experience as the assistant dietician at Ward Memorial Hospital in Nashville, I successfully supervised the preparation and serving of from 3,000 to 20,000 meals a day.

Having been an Army wife and lived in many places under varying circumstances, I have learned to use my own initiative in developing the facilities at hand. I believe in punctuality but am not a clock watcher, and I know from experience that I can direct people without resentment.

I've always enjoyed and participated in the many sports and social activities that are listed on the enclosed data sheet. As a Red Cross Director I could help others to share their pleasures too. I've learned to be adaptable, patient, resourceful, and—through grim necessity as a widow—cheerful!

The industrial-management applicant followed up his opening like this:

The program I followed at Northwestern University required five years of study because I felt that qualification for the field of industrial management should include basic engineering information. The scope of such courses as Business Organization and Cost Accounting were, therefore, enhanced and expanded by related work in Machine Design and Properties of Engineering Materials.

Three years in the Corps of Engineers of the U.S. Army form the main basis of my experience. A large part of this time was spent in the activities of a section officer in a large engineer depot. The knowledge, skills, and experience I gained concerning layout, storage, freight handling, and heavy packaging relate very closely to the problems of factory management in the production of heavy machinery. While working with the problems of shipping bulldozer blades, I was gaining experience that will aid me in understanding the special techniques required in handling cotton-pickers and tractors.

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I've learned how to get my ideas across in business-writing courses here at Northwestern as well as through being a reporter for *The Daily Northwestern*. As a member of the student governing board and the senior council I've had good lessons in cooperativeness and patience. And despite a pretty rugged schedule of classes and extracurricular activities, I've kept myself in good physical condition by participating on my fraternity's intramural basketball and football teams.

The enclosed data sheet and inquiries to the men I've listed there will probably give you all the information you want to know about me before seeing me, but I shall be glad to furnish any further particulars you may wish.

And the secretarial applicant to the exporting firm continued (after her opening) in the following vein, drawing exclusively on her schooling:

In secretarial courses during my two years of study at Temple College, I've consistently demonstrated my ability to handle material at these speeds. And as a matter of practice in my course in conversational Spanish I take down what my teacher and my classmates say. I have no difficulty transcribing these notes later in my own room.

I learned a good deal about your markets and your clientele while doing the research for a report I submitted this semester in marketing, "Some Recent Developments in Latin American Markets." In the process, I became familiar with such publications as *The American Importer*, *Exporting*, and *The Foreign Commerce Yearbook*.

I'm neat and conservative in my appearance. Early in my life my mother impressed upon me the desirability of a low-pitched voice and distinct enunciation; probably for that reason my speech teacher in college has been especially interested in helping me to achieve poise and dignity before a group of people. On the telephone or in person I could greet your clients pleasantly and put them at ease.

I've had little opportunity to travel in my 19 years, but after I start working I hope to use my vacation time for trips to Mexico, Central America, and South America.

*Overcoming deficiencies* is the function of the letter, not the data sheet. In almost any application situation you'll have one or more. In many cases the wiser course of action is simply not to talk about it! In other cases, if you feel that it is such an important consideration as to merit identification and possibly discussion, then embed it in your letter and endow it with as much positiveness as possible.

The young man wanting to be a publisher's representative had two strikes against him and knew it: the fact that he had gone through a commerce school plus the fact that he was a product of a state uni-

versity in the South rather than an Ivy League school. Turn back and note how in the fifth paragraph of his letter he met the issue head on and capitalized on it.

The industrial-management applicant had no experience. But did he apologize for it? Not at all! He held out his service experience confidently and showed its relation to the job sought. "Three years in the . . . U.S. Army form the basis of my experience," he wrote—instead of the weak-kneed statement, "The only experience I've had was in the Army" or even worse, "I've had no experience. But I did serve with the Corps of Engineers in the Army." And the nineteen-year-old secretarial applicant followed positive thinking in admitting her lack of experience and her youth.

Probably one of the finest examples we've ever seen of turning an apparent handicap into a virtue is that of a young woman graduate who at first didn't know where to turn when confronted with the necessity for getting a job. After thoughtful analysis of what she had done in college and how it could be used in business, she sent the following letter to a large Chicago mail-order firm. The third paragraph is sheer genius.

Isn't one of the significant qualifications of a correspondent in your company the ability to interpret a letter situation in terms of the reader?

Because I believe that I could express an understanding of a situation clearly and imaginatively to your customers (a degree in English from the University of Illinois, an A in Business Letter Writing, and the editorship of my sorority paper suggest that I can), will you allow me to become a trial employee in your correspondence division?

Learning your particular business policies and forms in writing letters would come quickly, I believe; I am used to following assignments exactly, and I have no previous working experience to unlearn.

I have a good background in writing. I can type 60 words a minute. And the varied extracurricular activities listed on the enclosed data sheet are my best evidence for telling you that I've successfully passed a four-year test of getting along with people.

Will you call me at 876-2401 and name a time when I may come in and talk with you?

It worked! And the same kind of positive approach to any handicap you may have—physical or otherwise—is probably your best way to treat it.

*Talking the special language* of your reader's business also convinces your reader of your performance ability and helps to overcome any deficiency. In all the samples you've been reading in this analysis

you probably noticed that each incorporated specific and special references to conditions or products or activities peculiar to the given job. Such references certainly further the impression that you are aware of job requirements and conditions. The would-be publisher's representative referred to books, teachers, college circumstances, and adoptions (the end and aim of that particular job). The industrial-management applicant referred easily and sensibly to two products of the company, tractors and cotton-pickers. The applicant to the Red Cross referred to service clubs, canteens, and the hard-working Red Cross girls who live in the barracks.

From your research you can readily establish such references. If significant enough information, they may be good choices of talking points for your beginning, as in the following three instances:

With the recent improvements on the foot-control hydraulic-power lift on Farmall tractors and the construction of a new implement plant at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, the International Harvester Company of Memphis will be selling more farm machinery than ever before. As a salesman of Farmall tractors and equipment, I am sure that I could help to continue your record of improving sales.

The marked increase in General Motors sales for the first two quarters undoubtedly reflects the favorable public reception of the new passenger car models and the new Frigidaire appliances.

These increased sales plus the increased production as announced in your Annual Report also mean more work for your accounting staff. I can take care of a man-sized share of this extra work, I believe—and with a minimum of training.

The regular Saturday Night Reports that your retail dealers submit show consumer trends which I want to help you translate into continued Whirlpool leadership—as an analyst in your Sales Department.

Each of these candidates continued to talk the terminology peculiar to the job applied for. For example, the salesman applicant referred knowingly to farmers and farming activities and to the selling activities of making calls, demonstrating, closing, and—probably most important in selling farm machinery—servicing. Such informed references are highly persuasive in any application letter because they establish in a desirable way the impression that the writer is well aware of the work conditions and requirements.

You want to show such knowledge, of course. But if you aren't careful to keep your analysis unobtrusive, you're in danger of sounding dull and flat.

*The undesirability of emphasizing analysis instead of qualifications* will be clearer to you through comparing the following original letter

and the revision. The original is almost painful in its flat, obvious statements. It also uses so much space stating requirements of the job that it fails to establish qualities of the applicant. The revision eliminates the flatness and preachiness through implication or incidental reference.

**ORIGINAL**

It takes a secretary who is versatile, accurate, reliable and dependable for a firm like the Brown Insurance Company. I realize the importance of your having such a secretary, and I believe I have the necessary qualifications.

Having graduated from the University of Alabama with commercial studies as my major, I am familiar with such machines as the adding machine, mimeograph, and comptometer. Since my graduation, I have been employed as a secretary with the Reynolds Metal Company. This has given me an opportunity to combine my knowledge with experience.

Insurance takes a lot of time and patience. A large amount of bookkeeping is required because every penny has to be accounted for. My one year of accounting at the University will enable me to keep your books neatly and correctly; and, if it is necessary for me to work overtime, I am in good physical health to do so.

Since the Brown Insurance Company has many customers in different parts of the country, a large amount of business letters and transactions are carried on. As your secretary, I could take dictation at 100 words a minute and transcribe your letters accurately and neatly at 45 words a minute.

**REVISED**

My year's work as a secretary, four years' thorough college training in commercial studies, and life-time residence in Tuscaloosa should enable me to carry on your necessary office functions and further the friendly relations between you and your clients.

Whether you want to send a memo to a salesman, a note to a client, or a letter to the home office, I could have it on your desk for signing and mailing within a short time. While earning my degree at Alabama, I developed a dictation rate of 100 words per minute and a transcription rate of 45, which I demonstrated daily during my year's work as secretary with the Reynolds Metal Company.

To help with the varied kinds of record-keeping in a large insurance agency I can bring to your office the knowledge and skills from a year's course in accounting and efficiency in operating the adding machine, mimeograph, and comptometer. Add to those my knowledge of filing systems which I gained in the office-practices course in school and applied during my year of work. You'll understand why I believe you can trust me to compute premiums accurately, send notices on schedule, and devise and turn out special forms when necessary. I anticipate the unex-

## ORIGINAL

## REVISED

Even though accuracy and speed are important, personality is an important characteristic too. Because of the many kinds of people who are connected with this type of business, it is important to have a secretary who not only can file, take dictation, and type, but who can be a receptionist as well. Since I have lived in Tuscaloosa all my life, I will know most of your clients as individuals and can serve them in a friendly manner.

I have enclosed a data sheet for your convenience.

Will you please call me at 374-4726 and tell me when I can talk to you?

pected, and I meet it calmly; so I am prepared to handle a number of duties and to adjust to the demands of a busy, varied work schedule (including over-time work when it's necessary).

I realize that in an insurance agency everyone from the janitor to the bookkeeper affects the feeling of the public and that all must exercise friendliness and tact in any contact with a client. I would expect to maintain cordial relations with all your customers quite naturally and easily because most of them are the neighbors and friends I've lived around all my life.

Mr. Bills and the other references I've listed on the enclosed data sheet will be glad to confirm my statements that I can work efficiently and cheerfully for you as a secretary who is able and willing to more than turn out letters. After you've heard from them, will you please call me at 374-4726 and name a time that I may come in and talk with you?

Though the revision is a little longer, it does a good deal more: it establishes qualifications in a good lead; it talks the special language of the reader; it establishes more qualifications. It also has a much better work-for-you interpretation. But the major improvement of the revision over the original is that it eliminates the preachy, flat statements (particularly at the beginnings of paragraphs) that made a smart girl sound unastute.

**Asking for Appropriate Action.** Whatever action you want your reader to take next, identify it as specifically as possible and ask confidently that he do it. Ordinarily it is to invite you in for an interview. When he gives you time, he is doing you a favor—and your attitude should reflect that fact. As a self-respecting human being who has something to offer, you do not need to beg or grovel; but you do need to show your realization of the fact that the reader is under no

obligation to see you, that the time and place of the interview are arranged at his convenience, and that you will be grateful for his seeing you.

The action ending of the sales letter is slightly modified in the application letter, however. You cannot with good grace exert as much pressure. For that reason, most employment counselors and employers do not advocate using any reply device (an employer is happy to pay the postage to send a message to a potentially good employee, and writing and mailing a letter are routine actions for which he is well set up). But your application action ending still suggests a specific action, tries to minimize the burdensome aspects of that action through careful phrasing, establishes gratitude, and supplies a stimulus to action with a reminder of the contribution the applicant can make to the firm.

You've already seen several action endings in this chapter. But to drive home the point, let's look at the action endings of the four letters with which we started this analysis.

The publisher's-representative applicant was in a slightly atypical situation. He couldn't afford to ask directly for an interview in New York because he had neither the money nor the time right then. (As it turned out, he flew to New York at the expense of the firms on two occasions within two weeks after sending the letter; but that was the result of further correspondence—and it's certainly not anything to count on!) So he wrote:

After you've had a chance to verify some of the things I've said about myself in this letter and on the data sheet, will you write me frankly about the possibilities of working for you?

Possibly I could talk with one of your regional representatives in this area as a preliminary step. And I can plan to come to New York sometime this summer if you'd like to talk with me further about my successfully representing your firm.

The Red Cross applicant definitely planned a trip to Washington for job-hunting purposes; so she concluded her letter logically and naturally with:

When I'm in Washington during the first two weeks in August, I shall be grateful for the opportunity to come to your office and discuss further how I may serve in filling your present need for Red Cross Club Directors. Will you name a convenient time in a letter to me at my Birmingham address?

The industrial-management applicant phrased his in this simple fashion:

Please dial 214-6910 and suggest a time when you can conveniently allow me to discuss my qualifications for work in your industrial engineering department.

And the secretarial applicant confidently asked her exporter-reader:

Won't you please call me at 615-5946 and tell me when I may come to your office and show you how well my preparation will fit into your firm?

Such letters as suggested in the preceding pages and in the check list for applications won't work miracles. They won't make a poor applicant a good one. They won't ordinarily secure a job; they can only open the door for an interview and further negotiations. But they will help alert, work-minded, prepared candidates to get started successfully in the business careers of their choice and to advance as they gain experience and upgrade themselves. You may want to review the list of suggestions starting on p. 666.

### **Writing the Invited Application**

Often a firm makes its personnel or employment needs known by running an ad in a periodical (newspaper or magazine), by listing them with an agency (commercial, where they'll charge you a fee, or governmental like the U.S. Employment Service offices and state-government equivalents, or college placement bureaus), or simply by letting the word spread and waiting to see what happens.

As you probably know, most large companies have recruiting personnel who regularly visit campuses scouting for talented young men and women.

In any of these cases, you don't need to generate interest. You have it! Furthermore, the analysis of job requirements is usually given you. An ad as a bare minimum identifies a job category and the principal duties. If you learn of the job through an agency, someone there will tell you the principal requirements. Even when you hear of the job through a third person, he will usually know and tell you what you'll be expected to do. Matching up your qualifications with the job requirements is easier in the invited situation than in the prospecting, because your source will usually identify requirements in some order indicating their relative importance to the employer.

If you are equally strong on all points of preparation, you have no problem; you simply take up the points in the order listed. But such a happy condition you'll rarely find. Most often your best talking point is not the most significant requirement, and usually you'll be deficient in some way. The solution is to employ the same strategy that you did in writing the invited sales letter: Tie in your strongest point of preparation with something the reader has indicated he wants done; take up those points wherein you are weakest in middle

position of the letter and attempt to correlate them with some positive point.

Your analysis of job requirements and compilation of a data sheet are exactly the same procedures as in a prospecting situation. Adaptation is simply easier. And, once past the opening, supplying evidence and asking for appropriate action are the same. So we shall not require you to spend time reading about something you already know or can easily turn back to and read. Since the beginnings in the prospecting and the invited applications do differ somewhat, we need to consider why and to make some suggestions that will help you write good ones.

Whether you learn of the job through an ad, through an agency, or via a third person, your beginning is pretty much the same. The first requirement is that it talk work and qualifications; the second, that it identify the job; the third, that it refer to the source of the information. The reason for naming this third function is simply that the reference to the ad, or the bureau, or the person who told you about the job is an automatic attention-getter which favorably reinforces the reader's willingness or even eagerness to read your letter. One good sentence can accomplish all three functions and point the trend of the letter.

The opening of the following letter puts emphasis on work, clearly identifies the specific kind of work sought, and desirably subordinates the reference to the source. Note that after the opening the letter reads much the same as a prospecting application (indeed, if you omit the lead in the faked address block and the first two lines, it could be a prospecting letter). Note also the adaptation of talking points—the stress on experience rather than on formal training.

I'm "sold  
on insurance"—

—and I believe I can be the aggressive salesman for whom you advertised in Thursday's *Express*.

Five years of experience in dealing with people very similar to your prospects—in addition to technical training in insurance and salesmanship—would aid me in selling your low-premium accident policy.

As a pipeliner in Louisiana in 1957 I made friends with the kind of men to whom I'd be selling your policies. I had a chance to study people, their hopes and fears and desires for protection and security, while doing case work for the Welfare Society in San Antonio the summer of 1958. And while working as a soda skeet both in high school and in college I learned how to work FOR and WITH the public.

The most significant thing I learned was to keep right on smiling even though dog tired at the end of my 6-12 p.m. shift after having

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been to school most of the day. And I certainly learned the meaning of perseverance when I had to go home after midnight and get on the books for next-day's assignments.

The same perseverance that earned me *B*'s in insurance and income protection, liability insurance, and personal salesmanship will help me find leads, follow them up, persuade, and close a sale. I know that an insurance man makes money for himself and his company only when he sticks to a schedule of calls. But I'm equally aware of the value of patience and the necessity for repeat calls.

Because I'm friendly and apparently easy-going, your prospects would like to see me coming. I was elected a Favorite at Schreiner Institute, and at The University of Texas I was tapped for Silver Spurs, a service-honorary organization. Making these many friends has resulted in my knowing people from all sections of the State.

My build and obvious good health inspire confidence. And since I'm 24 and single, I am free to travel anywhere at any time, as well as to work nights.

Dr. Fitzgerald and the other men I've listed on the enclosed information sheet can help you evaluate me professionally and personally if you'll write or call them.

I should be grateful if you would write me naming a convenient time and place when I may talk with you further about my qualifications for being the hard-working salesman that you want.

Frequently your source—especially an ad—gives you an effective entering cue and provides you with useful reference phrases throughout the letter. The ad the young man answered in the following letter can almost be reconstructed from the key phrases.

Because of my college training in accounting and my work experience, I believe I can be the quick-to-learn Junior Accountant for whom you advertised in the May *Journal of Accountancy*.

Having successfully completed down-to-earth studies in tax accounting and auditing while earning my degree in accounting at Alabama, I should be able to catch on to your treatment of these problems quickly.

And while working as assistant ledger clerk for the Grantland Davis firm in Atlanta one semester, I developed a great respect for accuracy as well as an appreciation of the necessity for the conscientious, painstaking labor so essential in public accounting. There, too, I also saw clearly the necessity for absorbing confidential information without divulging it in any manner to others.

My natural aptitude for synthesis and analysis strengthened by special study of the analysis of financial statements and re-enforced with a broad background of economics, law, and statistics should enable me to handle the recurring tasks of compiling comparative

statements of earnings and net worth. And training in writing reports will help me to tell the story to my seniors as well as to clients. Realizing that the public accountant must gain the confidence of his clients through long periods of accurate, trustworthy service, I welcome the offer of a long-range advancement program mentioned in your ad. I'm not afraid of hard work. And I enjoy the good health essential in the long, irregular working hours of rush business seasons.

Will you study the diversified list of courses and the description of my internship listed on the attached data sheet? Note also, please, the wide range of activities I took part in while maintaining an *A* average. Then will you write the references I've listed as a basis for letting me talk with you further about my qualifications for beginning a career of immediate usefulness to you?

I can start to work any time after graduation June 4.

A variation of source doesn't affect your procedure—except that you emphasize a source that would be influential in your getting the job but otherwise subordinate the source. If you learn of the work through an agency or a third person, the procedure is still the same. Here are some openings bearing out our statement:

Since I have the qualifications necessary to successful selling that you listed in your recent letter to the Dean of Students here at the University of Illinois, I believe I could serve you well as a salesman.

When I talked with Mr. Hugh Lomer this morning, he assured me that I am qualified by experience and professional training for the duties of a field auditor with your firm.

During the four years I worked as a branch-house auditor for the L. B. Price Mercantile Company to put myself through school, I became thoroughly familiar with every phase of accounting work necessary for a branch office of a large installment concern and with the reports required by the home office.

I'd certainly like the chance to prove that my training and personal characteristics parallel the description of the desirable management trainee that you gave to Dr. Morley, Head of our Placement Bureau, when you visited the campus last week.

Two warnings need sounding, however; the first is to guard carefully against the stupid question, the one with the obvious answer. It is usually the result of asking a question which is made perfectly clear from the ad or the situation. When a young lady began her application to a legal firm with—

Are you looking for a college-trained secretary who can do the work in your law office efficiently and accurately and who is eager to learn

law work? If so, I think I can meet your exacting requirements for a legal secretary.

—she was earnestly trying to highlight this employer's needs. But the reader had made perfectly clear in his ad the answer to her question! And an efficient candidate only looked silly in the eyes of this reader.

You don't need to worry about setting out requirements; they are already clearly established. Even this opening is questionable because the answer to it is so obvious:

Wouldn't that junior accountant you advertised for in the *Tribune* be more valuable to your firm if she had a sound understanding of accounting theory and principles and basic training in industrial accounting?

The reader would probably snort, "More? She wouldn't be valuable if she didn't!"

The second warning is against showing signs of selfish glee over having discovered a job opening of your choice. When you read or hear about the job, you may rightly think, "That's just what I want!"—but don't write that or any variation of it. Resist the impulse and start writing in terms of doing something for this reader: what you can give instead of what you hope to get.

Perhaps a third warning should be sounded against assuming that you don't have much of a selling job to do because the reader is on the asking end. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The competition you're up against when a job is advertised is keen even in the heyday of prosperity. And because many others will apply, you'll have to write a superior letter to be chosen as one of the final few for interviewing.

In fact, there may be such a heap of letters on the man's desk that yours may not even get read. For that reason, you may want to do one of several things so that your letter will command attention and thus be selected for reading. Most of these have to do with the physical impression or the mechanics of sending.

A favorite device is sending the letter by special delivery. Few personnel men ever object. If you are in the same town, you can deliver the letter yourself, with the request that it be turned over to the appropriate reader.

If you insert the letter in an envelope large enough to accommodate an  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  page without folding and put a piece of cardboard under it to keep it smooth, the contrast between your letter and all the others that have been folded will call attention to yours.

Cutting out the ad and pasting it neatly at the top of the page may single yours out for attention. Beginning your message with a faked address block which quotes from the ad is another device. Hanging

indention may help to make a rushed reader reach for your letter instead of another. Even appropriate color may cause the employer to read yours rather than another in the stack.

When the competition is keen, you'll need to take the time and exert the effort to be sure that your letter is one of the earliest arrivals. That may mean getting up early to get the first edition of the newspaper and having your material in such shape that you can have a complete, well-written letter and data sheet in the hands of the employer hours or even days before less alert candidates get theirs there. Even though you may not get the immediate response that you want, your letter (if it is good) becomes better in the eyes of the employer as poorer ones come in through the mail.

But none of these devices will make much difference if your letter is not written from the viewpoint of contributing to the firm through effective, efficient work.

As you already realize, the items we suggested to you in the prospecting application check list (p. 666) apply equally when you write an invited application. Study them again and review the additional items on p. 669, which are peculiar to the invited application.

### Continuing the Campaign

If within a reasonable time you do not hear from the person or firm you've applied to, send a letter indicating continuing interest. Write thank-you letters to anyone who spends the time giving you an interview. Make your job-acceptance letter sell you further. And write a nice enough job-refusal letter to make that reader realize he has lost a good person.

**Follow-Up Letters.** A good salesman doesn't make one call and drop the matter if he doesn't close the sale. Neither does a sales-minded applicant consider the matter closed if he doesn't hear from his application—or even if he receives the usual noncommittal letter telling him that the firm is glad to have his application and is filing it in case any opening occurs. If you are especially interested in working for a particular firm, you need not hesitate to send another letter two, three, or six months after the first one. It should not be another complete application (yours will still be on file); it is just a reminder that you are still interested.

In order to have a reason for sending a follow-up within a week, ten days, or two weeks after the original application, some applicants intentionally omit some pertinent but relatively insignificant piece of information in the original.

I noticed in re-reading my copy of the application I sent you last week that I did not list Mr. Frank Regan, Manager, Bell's Supermarket, Anniston, Alabama.

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Since I have worked under Mr. Regan's direct supervision for three summers, he is a particularly good man to tell you about my work habits and personality. I hope you will write to him.

Such a subterfuge we cannot commend, if for no other reason than that there are so many other approaches you can make. One acceptable one is this:

I know that in many organizations applications over six months old are thrown away.

Because that much time has elapsed since I sent you mine (dated April 15), this note comes along to assure you that I'm still interested in working for you, in having you keep my record in your active file, and in hearing from you when you need a man with my qualifications.

Only a lackadaisical applicant would end his letter there, however. With just a few more words he could bring information about himself up to date and perhaps stimulate more interest in his application. He could add something like this:

Since graduation I have been doing statistical correlations at the Bureau of Business Research here at the University. I've picked up a few techniques I didn't learn in class, and I've certainly increased my speed on an adding machine and a calculator.

I still want that job as sales analyst with your firm, however.

The foregoing two paragraphs could be a follow-up letter in themselves.

Election to an office or an honorary society, an extensive trip that has opened your eyes to bigger and better possibilities of the job, a research paper that has taught you something significant to the job, and certainly another job offer are all avenues of approach for reselling yourself and indicating continuing interest.

**Thank-You Letters.** Following an interview, your note of appreciation is not only a business courtesy; it helps to single you out from other applicants and to show your employer that you have a good sense of human relations.

Even when you and the interviewer have agreed that the job is not for you, you can profitably invest about two minutes writing something like this:

I surely appreciate the time you spent with me last Friday discussing employment opportunities at Monitor and Wager.

The suggestions you made will help me find my right place in the business world now.

After I get that experience you endorsed so highly, I may be knocking at your door again.

When you are interested in the job discussed and feel that there's a good chance for you, you're plain foolish not to write a letter expressing appreciation and showing that you learned something from the interview.

Your description of the community-relations program of Livania opened completely new vistas to me, Mr. Lee.

The functions of the public-relations department in your company as you described them made me much more aware of the significance and the appeal of this work.

As soon as I returned to the campus, I read Mr. Fields' book that you suggested and the pamphlets describing U.S. Steel's program. Many thanks for your suggestions and for the time you took with me.

I shall be looking forward to hearing the decision about my application as soon as you can make it.

**Job-Acceptance Letters.** When an employer offers you a job and you decide it's the one for you, tell him so enthusiastically and happily in a direct A-plan letter!

I certainly do want to work with Franklin & Franklin—

—and I didn't need a week to think it over, Mr. Bell, though I appreciate your giving me that much time to come to a decision.

I've filled out the forms you gave me and enclosed them with this letter.

Anything else?

Unless you tell me differently, I'll take off two weeks after graduation. But I'll call you on Friday June 11 to get report-to-work instructions for Monday June 14.

**Job-Refusing Letters.** Sometime in your life you'll have to tell someone that you don't want what he has to offer. And you may feel that it's routine, that it doesn't mean anything one way or the other to a busy man who interviews many applicants and has many possibilities available to him. Remember, though, that a human being with all his pride and ego is going to read the letter. And make yourself think, "I don't want that job *now*," for you may want to reopen negotiations at some future point. To wind up negotiations pleasantly and leave the way open for you, write a B-plan letter with a pleasant buffer of some favorable comment about the company or the work, some plausible and inoffensive reason, the statement of the refusal as positively as you can phrase it (possibly with the statement of where you are going to work), and an ending expressing good feeling and appreciation or both. The following letter is a good example:

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Meeting you and talking with you about working for Bowen's was one of the more interesting job contacts I have had.

The opportunity to learn the business from the ground up and to grow with an expanding company is a challenging one, one for which I am grateful.

As I told you, however, I am primarily interested in product research. Since I feel that my abilities will best be utilized in that way, I am going to work for [a company] that has offered me such employment.

I shall certainly continue to watch your company's progress with interest, and I shall look forward to reading or hearing about the results of your pre-packaging program.

***Letters of Resignation.*** Resignation letters, like job-refusing letters, are modified B-plan letters. When you have worked for a firm, you have benefited in some way (in addition to the regular pay you have drawn). Regardless of how you may feel at the time you decide to sever connections, remember that there is something complimentary you can say about how things are run, about what you have learned as a result of your experience, or about the people with whom you have been associated. Regardless of how bad you think things have been, you can always find something good to say. By all means, say it! Then announce your plans to leave, giving consideration to the necessity for ample time in which to find a replacement. In some cases, no more than two weeks is enough advance notification; sometimes it should be longer if it is necessary that you help to train the person who will take your place.

Remember, however, that you want to stay in the good graces of the individuals who have assisted you in your career. You will be wise to give ample notification, to give credit where credit is due. The suggestion to "Be kind, courteous, and considerate to the people you pass on the way up the ladder of success; you will likely meet them on the way back down" is good advice to keep in mind when you leave a job.

In many circumstances your resignation can be handled orally. And in many circumstances it may be better handled that way. But when you need to write a letter, consider adaptations of the following:

I've certainly enjoyed and learned a great deal about the clothing market from my work as sales analyst at Foley's the past eighteen months.

I shall always be grateful to you and the other personnel who have helped me do the job and to prepare for a more challenging one.

You will perhaps recall that when I had my interviews with you

before starting to work, I stressed my interest in working toward duties as a sales co-ordinator.

Since such an opportunity has been offered me by Sakowitz, Inc., I am submitting this resignation; it will apparently be some time before such an opening is available for me in this organization. I should like to terminate employment in two weeks. But I can make arrangements to work a little longer if that will help to train the person who takes my place.

My thanks and good wishes.

Often when another job offer comes your way, you'll feel free to discuss the opportunity with your current employer before making a final decision. Such a conference has many advantages for both employee and employer. Often a counteroffer results, to the mutual satisfaction of both; and the job change doesn't take place. If, despite a counteroffer, you still decide to make the change, you can resign in good graces with a letter somewhat like this:

Your recent offer is one that I appreciate very much, and it made me give serious thought to continuing on at Bowen's.

Let me say again how much I have appreciated the co-operation, the friendliness, and helpfulness of everyone with whom I've been associated here.

After considerably more evaluation, however, I believe that I can make a greater contribution and be a more successful business manager by accepting the position offered me by Lowen's.

I hope that I can leave with your approval by [specific date]; I feel sure that all my current projects will be completed by that time.

You'll hear from me from time to time—if for no other reason than that I'll be interested in how the new credit union works out.

But I'll also want to know how things are going for Bowen's and the many friends I've made here.

When appropriate, a possible talking point is the suggestion of a successor to you; often that's a big help. A constructive suggestion, phrased positively, implies your continuing interest in the organization.

Letters of resignation written by college students who resign after having agreed to work for someone but before actually reporting for work are something we take up with reluctance. Many personnel men regard this as a breach of contract. Certainly a practice of sliding out from under such agreements will soon give you a black eye employmentwise.

We would urge you to give serious thought before definitely accepting a job offer. Don't make the mistake of grabbing the first job

offered you, only to have something infinitely more to your liking come along later. We'd further urge you never to let yourself get caught in the position of being committed to two employers at the same time. If you have agreed to go to work for a firm and then have a later offer which you want to accept, do not accept it until you are released from the first contract. To the second potential employer, reply in some vein like this:

I certainly would like to accept your offer to come with your firm. As attractive as your proposal is, however, I must delay accepting it until I can secure a release from the Jenkins firm in Blankville. After my interview with you, I accepted this position, which at the time appeared to be the most promising available.

Can you allow me enough time to write the Jenkins Personnel Manager, explaining my reasons and requesting a release? (Incidentally, I can give him the names of two friends who might be suitable replacements.)

This shouldn't take longer than a week to settle. I appreciate your offer, regardless of how things work out.

If necessary, phone the second potential employer, explain frankly, and get his consent to wait. But for your own protection, get his consent before writing a letter like the following:

As you know, I am now planning to report to work as an executive trainee shortly after the first of June.

Before I made this agreement with you, I had talked with a representative of the Larkin organization in Sometown concerning possibilities of my working there as an analyst in the quality-control division, which is the kind of work I have specifically trained for and know I want to do.

I believe I'd be a better-adjusted and qualified employee in the Larkin job. That is the main reason I ask that you release me from my commitment with you. The fact that Sometown is a considerably larger city and that the starting salary is somewhat larger are only secondary considerations.

No doubt you have other people you can call on to take my place, but you may be interested to know that Don M. Jones and Peter Lawson are interested in the Jenkins program. You can get portfolios on both of them through the Placement Bureau here at school.

Since the Larkin people have agreed to postpone a decision until I have heard from you, I should appreciate a quick reply.

You can rest assured that I shall keep my word with you and that if your answer is "No," I shall report to work as promised and do all I can to be an efficient, co-operative, and cheerful employee.

(Only a Simon Legree would say "no" to the foregoing letter.) If the man releases you, you'd then write the appropriate acceptance letter to the second firm; but you should, as a matter of business courtesy, write a short thank-you letter to the first man.

## Two Useful Modifications of Applications

The following two letter possibilities for helping you get the job of your choice are not printed here with the implication that they will take the place of the complete sales presentation we have suggested to you. Because they may help you sometimes, we simply remind you of them.

***The Job-Anticipating Letter.*** Most personnel men are willing to give advice. And most of them are pleased with a show of interest in their companies and evidence of long-range planning on the part of a student. Several of our students have had successful results from letters like the following, sent in the junior year of college:

A course in business-machine operation under Mrs. Lora Osmus in the Statistics Department at Alabama gave me skill in their operation and showed me the tremendous possibilities of Burrows equipment for business use.

After comparing Burrows and ABL equipment that was on exhibit Commerce Day and talking with the Burrows representative in charge of your display, I am coming to you directly and frankly for some help.

Since I have completed practically all of the courses required for the B.S. in Commerce, I am free to elect practically all courses I shall study next year before June graduation. On the attached sheet I've listed those courses I've completed and those I'm contemplating. Will you please rank the ones you consider most beneficial for a prospective Burrows representative?

Naturally, I will regard your suggestions as off-the-cuff assistance that implies no commitment. I'm just trying to equip myself as well as I can to meet the competition for the first available job with your company after I graduate.

I shall be most grateful for your comments.

***The Telescoped Application Inquiry.*** We realize that good applications take time. They're worth the time, however.

But we also know that sometime, somewhere, you're going to need to send some in a hurry and simply cannot write a complete one. You may be able to make profitable use of the services of your College Placement Bureau in a letter, as one young man did. He was too busy writing a thesis and sitting for graduate examinations to prepare a thorough application. He sent the following request and a reply card to six firms:

With completion of an M.S. degree in accounting at the University of Alabama and two years of retail-merchandise accounting experience, I believe I could make you a good accountant with a minimum of training—and be able to advance more rapidly than the majority of accountants you could hire.

I am not just an accountant: a well-rounded background of finance, transportation, economics, and other related subjects will enable me, in time, to do managerial work as well.

May I have the Placement Bureau here at the University send you a transcript of my college record together with a detailed record of my experience, faculty rating statements, and names and addresses of former employers?

I shall be happy to furnish any additional information you may want and to be available for an interview at your convenience later if you will check and return the enclosed card.

He received replies from all six firms, it's true. But only one resulted in an interview.

This may be a stop-gap measure some time. But this young man's experience simply reconfirms the fact that an applicant must tell a complete story if he expects to get a show of effective interest.



Although letters exchanging information about applicants are a part of the employment routine, applicants themselves do not write them. For that reason, and because you studied them in Chapter V, we see no point in taking them up here. They are A-plan letters, characterized by directness and conciseness.

Likewise, we do not think that you need to study or write the kinds of letters an interviewer or employer writes to an applicant who is accepted for a position (clearly an A-plan, good-news letter) or to an applicant who is not accepted (a B-plan disappointing-news letter). With but simple changes of talking points and references, they follow the principles of their basic plan.

## **LETTER CASES FOR PART FOUR**

### **Prospecting Applications**

1. Assume that you are in your last term of school and graduation is just around the corner. Your greatest interest is in finding work which you like, for which you have been preparing for about four years, and in which you could support yourself now and a family later as you win promotions.

No job of your choice is revealed in the want ads of newspapers and trade magazines. No placement bureau has provided anything to your liking. So you decide to do as any good salesman does: survey the product (yourself), then the market (companies which in the scope of

their operations could use a person who can do what you are prepared to do), then advertise (send these companies a data sheet with a covering application letter), and then follow up with another letter if you don't hear from them. Such a procedure sometimes creates a job where none existed before; sometimes it establishes a basis for negotiations for the "big job" two, three, or five years after graduation. And very frequently it puts you on the list for the good job which is not filled through advertising or from the company staff.

To analyze the high points of your preparation you will need to study the lineup of courses that under your curriculum you expect to complete by the time you graduate. *This means you'll have to study your college catalogue.* It also means that you will have to make a temporary decision about the kind of work you want to do. You may be a general-business major with an equal interest in management and accounting; but you will—for right now—have to make the decision of which you want to do to earn a living. If you haven't the faintest idea of what you'd like to do, follow the suggestions in Chapter XI.

Use the courses you have had and make plausible assumptions (don't go daydreaming and woolgathering; stick to probabilities) about the courses you will have completed on graduation.

Distinguish between those courses which actually qualify you to do the type of work you are seeking and those which give you background education. If you've had experience directly related to the job you want as a career, that's fine; but any work you've done means qualifications (military experience—active duty—is in almost the same category as on-the-job experience). With these training and work sections mapped out, complete a tentative data sheet with personal details and some appropriate references.

Then study the market, as suggested under "Analyzing Companies." In actual practice you would compile a list of ten, twenty, or even more companies and send them an application. For this assignment, after some preliminary digging around, select one company and plan a letter-data-sheet combination addressed to that company. Adapt it as specifically as possible to the one company. You may be able to find out the name of the specific individual to address it to; you may not. If not, it can always be addressed to the Personnel Department or to the head of the particular department in which you are interested.

You will benefit from this exercise in application-letter writing only if you approach it earnestly and seriously. It should be a job utilizing your college training. It should be a job geared to what you could reasonably assume will be your level of performance at the time of graduation. (Few just-out-of-college folks can expect to be sales managers, chief buyers, senior accountants, copy chiefs, and the like; you'll have to begin at a subordinate level and work up; you'll want to show in your letter that you realize this fact. On the other hand, don't waste your time and your instructor's applying for something that you could readily do if you had never come to college.)

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Preferably, you would confine your presentation to a one-page letter and a one-page data sheet. But don't be afraid to go to two pages for either. As in sales letters, some highly successful ones run to two and sometimes even three pages.

In actual practice you would send the letter and data sheet together. As a work-control measure in a classroom situation, however, you are allowed to submit the data sheet (which you should in actual practice prepare *before* writing the letter) and a few days later, the letter.

In a job campaign like this, you would do well to get a reply to each of your letters. If half these replies asked you to send more information, you'd be lucky. If a fourth of your replies asked you to come for an interview, you'd be hitting a jackpot. If even one offered you a job without an interview, you could consider your letter phenomenal!

2. Write a job-seeking letter for work next summer. It should not only enable you to earn some money to apply on your college expenses; it should also be work which will be good preparation for the career you plan when you finish your degree and/or leave college. Too, consider the prestige value of the company name on data sheets you will prepare later in your life.

This may well be the company to which you would send an application upon graduation; if that is the case, shape your letter presentation accordingly.

3. Look over your local situation for part-time job possibilities, perhaps on your college campus or in the college community (close enough for you to arrange a schedule of classes that would permit you to work afternoons five days a week). Since you plan to attend school straight through, you could talk in terms of two years of work. Word the application so the reader will understand that between the end of summer school and fall registration you will either have to work full time or go to your home. Prepare a data sheet and letter that summarize and interpret your background up to the time of writing (of course, you would include subjects you are now studying).
4. You've decided that you want to earn some money, see some new places, and have some fun this coming summer. So you're going to address an application for summer employment to an inn at a resort (possibly one of the national parks). You'll have to indicate a willingness to do housekeeping duties (including kitchen and dining-room duties), though if you have enough maturity and the right kind of experience, you may be able to get some kind of clerical or even more specialized assignment. Since college students chosen for such jobs are really hosts (and hostesses) to the guests, stress poise, dignity, cheerfulness, as well as any talents for entertaining.
5. Modify the preceding problem to this extent: You want to be a counselor at a summer camp for children at least five years younger

than you. Choose one with which you are familiar, or find out about one from a friend of yours. Address the letter and data sheet to the camp director (by name if you can get it). Note here the importance of understanding and getting along with youngsters, the ability to direct activities, and the emphasis on athletic abilities. Apply to a camp which is not in your home town or your college town; it should be a residence camp, not a day camp.

6. With plausible assumptions and appropriate modifications, write a job-anticipating letter to the company of your choice. Assume that you have one more year of college studies before graduating.

### Invited Applications

1. A good starting point in job-getting is the want-ad columns of newspapers and magazines (especially trade magazines). Study the ones of your choice and find an ad that describes a job you would like to have, requiring qualifications you could reasonably assume at the time of your graduation (or some other assumed time as affected by your intentions). It should be a job utilizing your college training. And it should indicate clearly that letter—not telephone—answers are wanted. Clip this ad neatly to your letter; or, if you find the ad of your choice in a library copy, make an exact copy, with exact reference: name of publication, date of the issue, and page on which you found the ad. You may, instead, choose one of the ads listed later in this problem.

Draw on imagination, experience, and whatever information you can find out to bring the situation as close to reality as you can. Read the ad thoughtfully for what it says and search mentally for those qualifications which are only implied. Then evaluate your own training and experience in the light of this specific job. You can readily distinguish between courses that actually qualify you to do the job you're considering and those which are only background. You can certainly classify your work experience in an order of applicability to the given job. Further, analyze significant personal factors. And, finally, decide upon references. In actual practice you would want to send a data sheet. For this problem assignment you may assume a data sheet much like the one used with the prospecting application and refer to it in your letter.

Submit the letter trying to get the one job for which you are best suited, either from an ad you've found or one of the following (assume the city):

- a) Sales Trainee. College graduate, preferably in business administration. No traveling. Age 26-35, well acquainted in city. If you have limited opportunity to increase your income in your present position and are interested in training for sales career with national firm, you can earn from \$8,000 to \$25,000 annually. Adequate starting salary. Write full details to Box B-65, c/o News.

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- b) Credit and Adjustment Manager of national dress manufacturer needs assistant. Handle routine correspondence, supervise clerical help. Bright future for right man or woman. College training, business experience, mature judgment necessary. Salary \$5,500 to \$6,000 depending on qualifications. Box P-65, c/o *Press*.
- c) Accountant—Expanding national concern. Traveling. Good opportunity for man with ambition, personality, hard-work habits. State age, training, experience in confidential letter to M-89, c/o *News*.
- d) Advertising man for Peers-Loebuck store. Prefer experienced man; copy, selling, layouts, with general advertising and marketing background; might consider promising beginner. Write Box 897, City. Send samples of work.
- e) Secretary wanted for law firm. Write Box C-89, c/o *News*, stating age, training, and experience.
- f) Lady 20–35 experienced in bookkeeping, typing, and meeting public. Must do accurate and neat work. Correspondence by dictation two hours daily. Regular salary \$90 a week. Good background and personality important. Give details. Box E-98, c/o *News*.
- g) Immediate opening—Internal Auditor. For young college graduate with major in accounting to train as an internal auditor with growing national manufacturer in Ohio. Excellent opportunity for man with executive potential, ambition, attractive personality. Experience helpful, but not essential. Established concern. Up-to-date employee benefits. Write giving full details of qualifications and salary requirement. All replies will be kept confidential. Write A-98, *News*.
- h) Insurance Manager—City Banker Life Ins. Co. Must be able to hire and train sales personnel. Prefer college graduate with knowledge of insurance and business. Salary override commission, and renewal bonuses. Apply J. P. Morrison, Room 908, Comer Building.
- i) Stenographer—general office experience. Must be familiar with office machines. Be able to start in 30 days. Good starting salary— $5\frac{1}{2}$  day week. Give experience, telephone, and other essential details. Write Box D-90, c/o *News*.
- j) Production Manager for small midtown publisher and producer of distinguished and unusual illustrated books. Good experience. Prefer man under 30. Confidence guaranteed. Box 989, *Printers' Ink*.
- k) Distributor wanted for Tender-Vender Warmers for popcorn, Box 578, Miami, Florida. Capable man to handle exclusive franchise throughout state. Distributor receives help in setting up office and in training sales force.
- l) Office Manager—young man 23–35. Knowledge of all types office machines; knowledge of accounting desirable. Must have initiative,

ambition, adaptability, eagerness to learn. State full details, salary expected in letter. Large firm with sales-service outlets in key cities of U.S., Europe, Canada, Mexico. Local 10.

- m) National concern desires insurance or credit reporter. No selling or collecting. College education preferred. Be capable earning above \$7,000 annually. Write Manager, Box 3366 A, South Highlands Station (nearest metropolitan center).
2. The director of your college placement bureau (use his name) has just told you about the training program of a large corporation. The personnel director indicated in a letter to your placement officer that the company seeks young college graduates between 21 and 25 (this is not ironclad, however) to train for managerial positions throughout the organization. The training program lasts for a year. During that time trainees work in every division under close supervision and attend a series of classes. Assume a specific company and prepare a letter and data sheet. (If you have already written one for the prospecting application, you would use that form with only slight modifications; for this assignment, then, you may just assume the modified form. If you have not already prepared your data sheet, do so for this assignment.) As in any application, indicate your particular field of interest; but reflect a receptive attitude toward the various phases of the training program, showing your realization of its benefits regardless of the specific work you'll eventually perform.
3. Your college adviser is head of the department in which you are pursuing your major studies. This morning he tells you that a firm you hold in high regard is seeking a person with substantially your qualifications for a particular job you want. Fill in with the necessary specific details and write the letter you would send, assuming that your basic data-sheet presentation will accompany it.
4. The same college adviser (the preceding problem) also suggested several other companies as good prospects but stated specifically that he did not know that there are openings in these companies at present. "They hire a lot of people," he added, "and if there's no opening now, you can be pretty sure there will be before long." Using his name early in your lead, write the letter (assume the data sheet).
5. This morning, quite unexpectedly, you had an interview with the representative of a firm you'd like to work for. After a half-hour of talk which appeared to be mutually satisfactory and during which time you found out a lot about the company, the representative handed you one of the company employment forms for applying, shook your hand, and ushered you out of the room, saying, "Fill this out and return it to me with a letter of application." With the form filled in neatly and completely, draft the earnest but enthusiastic letter

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of application this man invited. Be careful to talk work rather than employee benefits. Assume specific names for the representative and the company. He said he would write you after receiving your letter.

### **Follow-Ups**

1. Not having heard from the application letter you sent in any of the preceding situations, write a fairly short letter re-emphasizing your desire to work for the firm. You may want to send it as soon as three weeks after the initial letter; you may prefer to wait longer. Clearly refer to the original application by date and type of work discussed. Include any additional data that you think will help sell you. This letter, however, should not be a rehash of what you have already written. It should identify the action you want the reader to take.
2. Assuming that it is almost a year after you sent your original letter, write a follow-up that reassures the firm of your desire to work there. In the meantime a good deal has happened to you (or should have!). Account for the way you have spent this time in such a way as to show that it is preparation for the job you seek.
3. Assume that you have had an interview as a result of your letter and data sheet. You know that the company representative interviewed several other candidates for the job. In a thank-you letter, confirm your interest in employment by the company and add other details to show that you picked up something from the interview. The representative promised to get in touch with you in a week or ten days.
4. As a result of your determined efforts and good showing, you've been offered the job of your choice. The letter so informing you requests you to fill in an employment form and return it and names a starting date that fits in with your plans. Write the acceptance.
5. Offered a job in response to your application, you have decided that you do not want to accept it because it is not in the field of your primary interest. Write the tactful letter that expresses appreciation for the time spent with you and the interest shown in you and that leaves the way open for you to resume negotiations later if you care to. Comment favorably on some aspect of the company.
6. You have just been informed that you were not chosen for the job you have worked so hard to get . . . and still want. Remember, however, that you were considered, that someone spent a good deal of time with you, and that, employmentwise, nothing is ever final. Write the letter showing appreciation for the courtesies extended you, revealing how you have profited from the contact, and showing your determination to reach your intended goal. Above all, the letter should reflect a friendly feeling toward the company and the representative addressed.

7. In response to your application you receive an invitation to come in for an interview at a time and place convenient for you. Write the acceptance confirming the circumstances.
8. Assume that in response to your prospecting application you receive an invitation to come in for an interview at a time which would be convenient if you had the money for traveling to the distant point. Write the letter which reaffirms your interest. Admit your lack of funds and ask if it is possible to see a representative of the firm at a place which is more accessible to you.



## **Part Five**

# **WRITING REPORTS**



# XIII. Reports: Importance, Nature, and Preparation

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History and Present Need  
Nature and Classification of Reports  
Planning the Attack  
Collecting the Facts  
    Library Research  
    Observation  
    Experimentation  
    Surveys  
Organizing the Findings  
Interpreting the Facts  
Writing Appropriate Report Style  
    Basics of Report Style  
    Documentation  
    Objectivity in Presentation  
    Headings and Subheads  
    Presentation of Quantitative Data  
    Nonverbal Assists to Words

## History and Present Need

IN THE early history of man, reports were not needed. Every man was his own complete business firm or the overseer of a small group of people under his command. As on-the-spot manager of his affairs, a man saw all the facts he needed for making decisions about how to operate his business. For example, when a shipowner captained his one small ship, he saw all the operations and consequently needed no reports. The one central purpose of most reports—*to help the receiver make a decision by providing facts and ideas he does not have*—was taken care of by the shipowner's personal observation of all the information he needed.

Then some men gained power over large groups of others as their employers, masters, or tribal chieftains. When one of these bosses sent an underling out to do some work or to scout an enemy tribe, the boss wanted a report indicating difficulties encountered, or to be encountered, and the underling's suggestions of materials, personnel,

necessary time, and plans for overcoming the difficulties. For example, when a successful shipowner built a second ship and put a hired captain on it to develop trade along a different route, the owner needed reports of the second ship's activities, if he was to make wise decisions about future operations. Thus the ship's log came into being as one early form of written report. The impossibility of the manager's being in two places made reports necessary. Overcoming the problem of distance, then, is the first specific function that reports may serve in achieving their general purpose of helping the receiver make a decision.

When businesses grew to where the manager could not find time to oversee all operations even under the same roof and some of the processes became so technical that the manager did not have the knowledge to evaluate all of them, reports became more and more widely used for two more reasons: time and technology.

With the increasing complexity of business and government, records became more important too; and, as their fourth possible function, written reports provided permanent records for the files, thus preventing later repetition of work and making it possible (through extra copies) to inform interested secondary readers.

As executives became responsible for more and more varied activities, the wiser ones also began to realize that they could not do all the desirable thinking about new products, new or improved processes, and new marketing methods. They therefore invited employees with initiative to submit their ideas in what are generally called "initiative" or "justification" reports. Thus reports began to serve management in a fifth way as vehicles for creative ideas.

If you bring these trends up to the present world of complex economies and governments—

- Where top management may be thousands of miles from some operations
  - Where management cannot possibly find time to oversee all the activities even in one large building
  - Where some of the processes are so technical that no man could be competent to decide wisely about all of them
  - Where numerous records must be kept and several people informed
  - Where competition pushes a company to use all the creative brain power of all employees in developing new ideas
- you see that reports have become an absolutely essential tool of modern management in making decisions.

For that reason, management today expects almost every employee to be able to write reports. And, as you have seen in "Why Study Report Writing" (p. 8), management often gets its best indication

of how well a man is doing his job from the reports he writes. Thus reports often serve in a sixth way—as a basis for evaluating the employees who write them.

Indeed, modern management cannot well perform as it does without its important tools—including reports.

Imagine a board of directors trying to decide on a proposed new plant without a report showing that reasonably expected profits from increased production will cover estimated costs. Isn't the question of a promotion for a staff member usually settled on the basis of a report of his activities and worth? Would a board approve a suggested new product without a report showing that income from sales would likely be great enough to leave a profit after covering production and distribution costs?

Most reports have to answer one or more of the following three general questions:

1. Will a given new proposal pay? The answer is not always in terms of money but must be in some kind of benefits—usually higher quality or quantity, or less time, money, material, or effort. Maybe safety or good will.
2. Which is the best (or better) way? Often the answer is a choice between the present way and a proposed new one. But it may be between or among products (Smith or Royal typewriters for our offices; Chevrolet, Ford, or Valiant for our fleet; repair the old or buy a new . . . ).
3. Is it feasible? Can you imagine approval of anything like Michigan's Mackinac Straits Bridge without an engineering report on the feasibility of building it, as well as reports on the economic justification and methods of financing, not to mention the hundreds of reports necessary in the constructing job?

Indeed, can you imagine any board of directors, president, governor, manager, superintendent, or department head in any organization—public or private—approving substantial expenditures, changes in operations, or new regulations without reports (some of which may be oral) of studies showing that beneficial results will justify the action? Those in charge just don't make important moves without some kind of justifying reports. Even a dictator with egotism less than belief in his own omniscience or his having a private line to God will want staff reports, to follow or ignore as he wishes.

If you need more evidence that learning to write better reports will be a worthwhile activity for you, turn back to pp. 8–10 and read "Why Study Report Writing?"

## **Nature and Classification of Reports**

Just as a building, piece of furniture, or anything else should be designed according to its functions, so should reports. In the fore-

going discussion of the functions of reports, you have seen several implications of their nature. Yet the word *report* is such a broad concept that it cannot be well defined in a few sentences. All known attempts at definition are either incomplete, too general to be useful, or not quite true. (For example, if you say that reports interpret facts, you are obviously talking only about analytical reports and omitting the numerous informational reports, which do not interpret the facts they present.) The best way to get a clear idea of the meaning of the word *report* is to consider the usual characteristics of reports, along with the special characteristics of different types.

Usually, but not always, a report—

1. Is a management tool designed to help an executive in making decisions. Thus it is *functional* writing for the *benefit of the reader*. The reader, not the writer, is the important person involved. Since he wants *useful* information which he does not already have, a report is quite different from a term theme turned in to a professor.

The *research* report is the most likely exception. Since it is a report of pure research pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, it may not point to any immediate use by specific readers.

2. Is an assigned job. Besides the research report, the *justification* (or *initiative*) report may be an exception; but even it may be written in response to a standing invitation to submit ideas (as in a suggestion box). Otherwise, *periodic* reports (at regular intervals, such as weekly, monthly, quarterly) are assigned as part of an employee's regular duties, and *special* reports are assigned as occasions arise requiring them.

Usually the assigner will make clear whether he wants an *informational* report just giving the facts or whether he wants an *analytical* report (sometimes called *recommendation* or *improvement* reports) giving the facts plus interpretation into conclusions and/or recommendations. If he doesn't, the report writer should find out from him. Otherwise the writer may be embarrassed to be called in and told to finish his job—to analyze the facts and show conclusions and recommendations. Or perhaps more embarrassing, if the writer has gone too far and seemed to infringe upon the executive's prerogative of deciding what to do, he may be told to keep his opinions and recommendations to himself and leave the decision making to the boss.

3. Goes up the chain of command. A few reports go between people of equal rank, as between two department heads; and some (directives) downward from executives (but most reports that executives write are to still higher authorities—boards of directors, legislatures, or the people who elected them).
4. Is written for one reader or a small, select group of readers. A report writer can therefore adapt his talking points and lan-

guage well. Usually, there is one immediate reader, who may send the report on up the chain of command to just a few higher executives. The corporation annual report, aiming primarily at stockholders and employees, still aims at an unusually large readership for a report.

5. Gets more than normal attention to organization. Of course, all good writing is organized; but because reports are usually expositions of complex facts and ideas for practical purposes and for busy readers, report writers work harder at organization than most other writers.
6. Makes more than normal use of the techniques and devices for communicating clearly, quickly, and easily: commonly understood words; short, direct sentences and paragraphs; headings, topic sentences, and brief summaries; itemizations; graphic presentations; and specific, concrete, humanized writing.
7. Is expected to be accurate, reliable, and objective. No executive wants to base decisions on a report writer's errors, assumptions, preconceptions, wishful thinking, or any kind of illogicality. Though no person can be strictly objective—because his selection of facts to include and his evaluation of them are based on his whole background and the kind of person he is—the report writer strives to be as objective as possible. And where the reader might otherwise question the validity, the report writer explains his sources and methods of collecting data to show the soundness of his facts.
8. Follows the special form best suited to its particular functions. Thus we speak of such special forms as *letter*, *memo*, *credit*, *justification*, and *complete* (or *long* or *formal*) reports. If the name *complete* suggests that the other forms are incomplete, it is justified in doing so. The others actually leave out or combine some parts which do not need full, separate development under the circumstances. If the name *formal* suggests that the shorter reports are informal, that is usually true—though any report may be formal in those situations where the relationship between writer and reader(s) is formal. Usually those situations involve the *public* reports of government and military services rather than the *private* reports of business and industry. And usually they are sizable studies that require long rather than short reports.

The *progress* report is the most flexible of all. Like other reports, in terms of subject matter it may concern any project; in timing, it may be *periodic* or *special*; in terms of function, it may be informational or analytical; its form, length, and degree of formality may be whatever is appropriate to the situation.

For the report writer, however, much more important than knowing the classifications of reports (except possibly the distinction between *informational* and *analytical*) is close attention to the char-

acteristics reports should have: *full of useful information that is accurate, reliable and objective, presented in functional rather than literary style, adapted to the reader, carefully organized, and clearly, quickly, and easily readable.*

Preparing a complete analytical report is a five-step process: planning the attack on the problem, collecting the facts, organizing the facts, interpreting the facts (this step omitted in preparing an informational report), and writing up the report in appropriate style. Since any or all of the five steps may be necessary in varying degrees in the preparation of a particular report in any form, we present those five steps before explaining and illustrating different forms.

### Planning the Attack

Planning the attack is a job to be done at the desk—the head work before the leg work. It involves six procedures, in the following sequence:

1. Get a clear view of what the central problem is. If you can't see the problem you're shooting at, you're not likely to hit it.

This procedure requires reflective thinking. It may also require a conference with the man who needs the report. As a check, you can try writing a concise and interesting title that clearly indicates the content and scope. If you can also write in one sentence a precise statement of the purpose, clearly indicating what you intend to cover and what you don't, you have the necessary clear view of the problem.

2. Consider conditions that influence the report—the use to be made of it, its importance, and the attitude, degree of interest, knowledge, and temperament of the reader(s), for example.

In considering use, don't overlook the fact that reports are commonly filed for future reference after they have served their immediate purpose and that therefore they need to be clear to other readers ten years later. Also, the immediate superior who asked for the report may have to send it on up the chain of command for approval before anything can happen. So it needs to be intelligible to possible readers other than the immediate one.

The reader's temperament and knowledge of the subject have considerable influence on how much background and detailed explanation you need to give, and whether you can use technical terms. His attitude, as well as your reputation as an authority, will influence how persuasive you need to be (whether you use the convincing inductive plan or the faster, more interesting, but possibly less convincing deductive plan). His known biases and special interests may influence what you should stress and whether you must use impersonal style. Your relationship to the primary reader will indicate how formal or informal the style should be.

Limitations on time, money, or availability of data may affect how thorough you can be and whether you can use costly plates and charts.

3. Divide the central problem into its elements, the main divisions in an outline of the topic. The idea of dividing to conquer applies in report writing as well as in military strategy.

Whatever you do at this stage toward outlining will probably be only tentative and skeletal. You'll probably change it later, after you have the facts. At this point you merely need a starting guide to what kinds of facts to collect. So don't worry too much about form and accuracy; specific instruction on the finished outline comes later.

Of course, not all problems divide alike, any more than all jigsaw puzzles do; but the dividing process is a job of finding the natural divisions of the whole. For that purpose, you should temporarily ignore the introduction and begin your tentative outline with II. If the problem is one of deciding between two or more things, the *criteria* are usually the best major division headings. For example, if you are trying to decide which of several jobs to take, on what bases do you decide? Maybe

- II. Kind of work
- III. Location
- IV. Beginning pay
- V. Chances for advancement
- VI. Working conditions.

Some topics to consider in many problems are history, disadvantages of present system, advantages of proposed system, costs and means of financing, personnel required, effects on good will, method of installation, materials required, time involved, safety, increases or decreases in quality, market, competition, convenience, and availability of land.

4. Raise specific questions about each element. The questions further divide the problem, lead to subheads in your outline, and point more directly toward collecting data for answers. If cost is one of the elements, for example, you want to ask what the costs are for operating one way and what they would be under a revised system. You would then want to question further about how to find the costs in each instance. And you might do well to break the questions down further into first costs, operating costs, and depreciation; costs for personnel, for upkeep, for power, and the like. Specific questions on good will might include those about customers, stockholders, workers, and the general public.
5. Take stock of what you already know. You may pose a hypothesis, but don't let it close your mind to other possible solutions. Don't assume that you know the answer until all the facts are in. You certainly don't want to start out to prove a preconceived notion.

Get a clear concept of the assumptions you are willing to make, and separate those which are to be held without further checking from those which are to be checked.

Jot down answers known for the questions raised and the tentative answers to be checked. Clearly indicate gaps in information that are to be filled by data to be collected, and jot down what you think tentatively are the best sources and methods for getting the missing data—experts, books, and articles, and maybe the man for whom you're writing. Or maybe you need to plan a survey—kind and size of sample, kind of survey, and the like.

6. Make a working schedule. Assign time blocks estimated to be necessary for each of the remaining steps in producing the report: collecting remaining data, organizing, interpreting, and writing up the final report. If you plan a survey, remember that the mail requires time and that people don't always respond to questionnaires immediately. For any except the most routine kind of reports, be sure to allow some time for revising early drafts to put the final report in clear, interesting, and inconspicuous style and form. But the first item on the working schedule is the next step in report preparation—collecting the facts.

### Collecting the Facts

For collecting complete and reliable facts, the report writer may use any or all of the four basic methods of securing information: library research, observation, experimentation, and surveys. The first provides secondary (secondhand) data, and the others provide primary (firsthand or new) facts. In most cases the report writer should use at least two of the methods in a way to get at the essential facts and assure reliability of them.

**Library Research.** Study of published books, articles, theses, brochures, and speeches is the most universally useful and is usually the best first step. When you face any problem of consequence, somebody else has probably faced the same or a closely related problem and written up something worth while about it. And when pertinent data are already written up, getting the facts by reading them in the other fellow's collection is nearly always the easiest and quickest way—easier and quicker than the laborious process that the original writer went through to get them. Besides being the quick and easy way to collect facts, it may also give a bird's-eye view of the whole problem, acquaint the report writer with terminology and methods he may not have thought of, refer to other good sources, show formerly overlooked natural divisions and aspects of the problem, and, in general, help the writer to revise his tentative plan of attack.

Fortunately libraries are pretty well standardized. They have a great variety of regular reference books such as

Encyclopedias (*Americana*, *Columbia*, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, and the *Britannica*, which is the most thorough)

Census reports (U.S. government censuses of agriculture, business, housing, manufacturing, population, and minerals and other breakdowns)

Yearbooks of various countries, trades, and professions (commerce, shipping, agriculture, engineering, and others)

Almanacs (notably the yearly *World Almanac* with a surprising variety and amount of information, both statistical and otherwise)

Atlases (especially those by Rand McNally)

Dictionaries of many different kinds (the big *Webster*, for example, giving lots of information besides that about words)

Directories (such as Kelly's for merchants, manufacturers, and shippers; Thomas' for American manufacturers, Ayer's for newspapers and magazines)

Who's who in various fields (including the *Directory of American Scholars*, *American Men of Science*, and *Who's Who in Commerce and Industry*, and Poor's *Register of Directors and Executives*, for example)

Statistical source books (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, *Survey of Current Business*, *County and City Data Book*, and *Ayer's Directory*)

These are just a few main examples of the numerous reference books that are usually placed conveniently out on tables or in open shelves in a library. Constance Winchell's *Guide to Reference Books* tells about them and many more.

The standard key to books in the stacks is the card catalogue arranged alphabetically by author, subject, and title.

But because libraries available to most writers will not have all the books published on their subjects; because it takes months for books to be published, bought by libraries, and catalogued for distribution; and because not all topics are written up in full-book treatment, the report writer often finds that his best up-to-date printed sources are periodicals. Fortunately, most of them are covered in one or more of the numerous periodical indexes, both general and specific for almost any field. The accompanying table (next page) describes the main current indexes; but if you do not find one for your specific field, ask the reference librarian.

And if the abbreviations or the system of indexing is not immediately clear to you, the preface always explains.

Whatever library key you use, you need to develop resourcefulness. Often when you look under one topic (say "Business Letter Writing" or "Report Writing") you will find little or nothing. Don't

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give up. You have to match wits with the indexer and try to think of other possible wordings he might have used for the topic. He might have put "Business Letter Writing" under "Business English" or "Commercial Correspondence" and "Report Writing" under "Technical Writing" or something else.

When your resourcefulness brings you to a book or article that seems to be useful, scan it to see what (if any) of it is grist for your mill. A look at the table of contents may tell you whether it will be helpful.

If it seems pertinent, check its reliability. Consider both the textual evidence and the reputation of the publisher and of the author for (1) any possible slant or prejudice, (2) the question of whether the author is a recognized authority in the field, and (3) the question of whether the material is up to date. Reading a review in a related journal can help in judging the worth of a book. A sound report writer will not be duped by the usual undue worship of the printed word; he knows that the mere fact that something is in print does not make it true.

If the material meets the tests for reliability, take notes—**A SEPARATE CARD OR SHEET OF PAPER FOR EACH IMPORTANT NOTE**. To save time later in arranging notes, put a slug at the head of each note card (that is, some notation to indicate where the information fits in your plan).

When in doubt, take fuller rather than scantier notes than you think you need; it's easier to omit later than to come back for more.

Some parts you may want to take verbatim, but usually not; direct quotation should be used rarely, and then only to gain the impact of the author's authority or to take advantage of his conciseness, exactness, or aptness of phrasing. If you do quote, be sure to quote exactly and not change the original meaning by lifting a small part from context in which it meant something different.

In most cases you can save words and express the idea better for your purposes if you paraphrase. When you paraphrase, however, be sure not to change the original meaning.

In some cases you may see that you can save time later by writing your notes as a review of the article or book—that is, from your own point of view, giving the essential content of the article plus your comment on it—because that seems to be the form it will take in the final report. In other cases you will condense, digest, or abstract the article.

Whether you quote, paraphrase, review, or abstract the article or book, you need to list in your bibliography all printed sources used directly in the preparation of the report; so you need to take the necessary information while you have the book or magazine in hand.

## MAIN CURRENT INDEXES

Title	Coverage	System	Publication Facts (Most Frequent Issue and Cumulation)
<i>Accountants' Index</i>	International technical books, magazines, and newspaper articles	Alphabetically by topics, authors, and titles	Supplemented irregularly about every three years
<i>Agricultural Index</i>	International on all printed sources	Alphabetically by subject and title	Monthly except September; quarterly
<i>Applied Science &amp; Technology Index</i> , since 1958 successor to <i>Industrial Arts Index</i> (1913-57)	Scientific, engineering, technical, and semitechnical American and Canadian magazines	Alphabetically by subject	Monthly except August; annually
<i>Business Periodicals Index</i> (1959-)	Business, industrial and trade magazines	Alphabetically by subject	Monthly except July; annually
<i>Cumulative Book Index</i> (a supplement to the <i>United States Catalogue</i> )	Any book published in the United States	Alphabetically by author, title, and subject	Monthly; quarterly
<i>Education Index</i>	Professional literature	Alphabetically by author and subject	Monthly except July and August; three-year
<i>Engineering Index</i>	Domestic and foreign literature on engineering	Alphabetically by topics	Annually, plus continuous card-file service
<i>International Index to Periodicals</i>	Humanities, social sciences, and sciences; emphasis on history, international relations, political science and economics	Alphabetically by author and subject	March, June, September, December; three-year periods
<i>New York Times Index</i>	The news in the paper	Chronologically and alphabetically by subjects, persons, and organizations	Semimonthly; annually
<i>Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS)</i>	Government documents and pamphlets of general, technical, and economic interest	Alphabetically by subject	Weekly except only two in August and three in December; annually
<i>Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i>	General American magazines	Alphabetically by author and subject	Semimonthly; semi-annually
<i>Wall Street Journal Index</i>	Corporate and general business news	Alphabetically by subject	Monthly; annually

Though bibliography form is not standardized, the usual information is author's name (surname first, for alphabetizing), title of book or article and magazine, publisher and place of publication for books, edition if not the first for books, volume and inclusive page numbers for magazine articles, and the date. For use in citations in the text, you always need to record the specific pages used for each note.

**Observation.** The second method of collecting data—observation—is used here to include not only its usual meanings but also investigation of the company records on finances, production, sales, and the like. As such, it is the main method used by accountants and by engineers for their inspection and progress reports.

Their job of collecting data by observation usually involves no particular problem of getting at the facts. The important part is more likely to be knowing what facts to consider. That requires keeping in mind what the purpose is, so as to notice everything relevant and to relate each pertinent fact to the whole situation.

The technique is well exemplified by a skilled policeman's investigation of a murder scene or of an automobile accident scene. Camera, measuring tape, and note pad are standard equipment for outside observation, just as the accountant's special paper, sharp pencil, and calculator are for inside inspection of the records. Still the most important pieces of equipment are sharp eyes to see the situation, judgment to evaluate it, and (most important) imagination to see the relevance of a particular observed fact to the whole problem.

Observation has the advantage of being convincing, just as the testimony of an eyewitness convinces a jury more than circumstantial evidence; but it has the disadvantage of not getting at motives. That is, it may answer *what* but not find out *why*. And unless the observer is careful, he may put too much stress on a few isolated cases or facts.

**Experimentation.** For the most part, laboratory experimentation (which is closely related to observation as a method of collecting facts for reports) is useful in the physical sciences rather than in business and the social sciences and in industrial rather than commercial operations. And, of course, the methods used vary almost infinitely according to the particular experiment to be done. They are best taught by a specialist in the particular physical science, in the laboratory with equipment, rather than through a small section in a textbook mainly about something else. Regardless of his field, however, the experimenter is as zealous as the report writer about the reliability of his results. The basic requirements for reliability in experimentation are three:

1. Accurate equipment. If the laboratory balance is inaccurate or if the tachometer or thermometer misrepresents the facts, the results of an experiment using them will be unreliable.

2. Skilled techniques. If the technician doesn't know how to set his microscope, he won't be able to see an amoeba; and if he can't pipette both accurately and fast, he will be no good at Kahn tests.
3. Sufficient controlled repetition of results. If the experimenter takes two specimens just alike, treats them exactly alike except in one way (perhaps inoculates one, keeping the other for a control), and gets different results (say one gets a disease and the other does not), he makes a strong start toward convincing us. If he repeats the experiment and exactly the same happens every time (100 per cent), he need not make many repetitions to be thoroughly convincing. For every drop from 100 per cent, however, the scientist has to multiply his tests many times to produce similar faith in them. *Testing one variable at a time is basic.* If different soil, seed, and temperature are used, different results cannot be attributed to anything.

Experts in certain phases of business can use experimentation that closely parallels laboratory methods if they are careful about their equipment, techniques, and controls. For example, marketing specialists can test the comparative effects of different advertising campaigns and media, sales-promotional devices, prices, and packaging. Their problems of equipment and technique are psychological instead of mechanical and manual, and their controls are difficult to set up to make sure that only one element is changed; but experts can and do manage all three to assure reasonable reliability. (See pp. 269-71 on testing sales campaigns.)

**Surveys.** Often in business the quality to be tested is not subject to exact laboratory examination—the sales appeal of a new car, for example. The only place to get an answer to that is from the people. In fact, the survey for fact and opinion vies with library research as a method of collecting data for business and social science reports. It is particularly useful in discovering WHY people do certain things and in FORECASTING what will happen (frequently an important job of reports).

Regardless of which of the three kinds of surveys you use—mail questionnaire, personal interview, or telephone interview—certain basic problems, principles, and techniques are involved.

The first problem is determining what people you will survey. In some cases you may decide that the opinions of a few experts will be worth more than the answers of thousands of the general public, as they will be if the problem is technical or professional. If the whole group involved (called the "universe" by statisticians) is small, you may decide to ask all of them. But in most cases you take a sample.

For sound results you then have to decide on how large a sample is necessary. That will depend on the degree of accuracy required and on the variety of possible answers. For instance, if + or - 10 per

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cent is close enough, your sample can be much smaller than if you have to be accurate within a range of 1 per cent. And if you have to forecast election returns only in terms of Democratic, Republican, and other votes, your sample can be much smaller than if you have to forecast the purchases of the fifty or more makes and body styles of cars. As an even simpler illustration, it is certainly easier to predict the fall of a coin (only two choices) than of a pair of dice with eleven possibilities.

Though a full treatment of sampling theory would require a complete book, statisticians have provided us with some simple devices for determining adequate sample size. The simplest is the split-sample test. You break your sample arbitrarily (that is, to avoid any known differences) into two or more parts. You then compare the results from the various parts. If the results from the partial samples are acceptably close together, the results from the total sample will be acceptably reliable.

Two more precise checks on sample reliability require only a little mathematics.

1. If your survey results are in percentages, you apply the formula

$$N = \frac{pq}{E^2}.$$

Suppose you have decided that error (E) of + or - 5 per cent will be close enough for your purposes. When you have enough returns to estimate the apparent division of answers (say 70 per cent yes and 30 per cent no), you can find N (the number of returns required) by  $N = \frac{0.7 \times 0.3}{0.05 \times 0.05} = \frac{0.21}{0.0025} = 84$ .

2. If your survey results are in terms of the average (arithmetic mean),

$$\text{the formula is } \sqrt{N} = \frac{\sigma}{\sigma_{\bar{x}}}.$$

If you don't know how to figure the standard deviation ( $\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N}}$ ) and the standard error of the mean ( $\sigma_{\bar{x}}$ ), any elementary statistics book will explain. But for quick, easy calculations accurate enough for most purposes, use

a)  $\sigma = 1/6 R$  (range, or difference between the highest and lowest figures in the sample).

b)  $\sigma_{\bar{x}} = \text{allowable error in your result.}$

Thus if you want to find the number of scores necessary on a test to establish an arithmetic mean with allowable error of no more than 1 point where the highest score is 76 and the lowest is 34, your figures are  $\sqrt{N} = \frac{42 \div 6}{1} = \frac{7}{1}$ .  $N = 49$ .

Even your adequate sample must be stratified (sometimes called "representative"), or your results can go wild. That is, each segment

of the universe must be represented in the sample by the same percentage as in the universe. According to sampling theory, that will be the result if you take a large enough *random* sample (one in which each item in the universe has an equal chance of getting into the sample). In practice, however, you often have trouble making sure that you really have a random sample. Unsuspected selective factors may work to produce a nonrepresentative sample.

To avoid that possibility, you can use stratified sampling *if you have data showing the proportions of different segments in your universe*. Fortunately you usually do. Just as a college registrar's office knows the numbers of students in different classes, majors, age groups, grade-point groups, and the like, the statistical source books provide breakdowns of people in nearly every imaginable way. Whatever group you may want to sample, you probably can find the proportions of the different segments making up the universe. If 50 per cent of your universe are farmers and 70 per cent telephone subscribers, then half your sample must be farmers and 70 per cent telephone subscribers.

Adequate size and stratification together make a sound sample.

A sound sample can still produce unsound results, however, unless your techniques of getting answers from it are also sound. If you start out by surveying a minimum sound sample but get answers from only half of it, the sample of actual answers is unsound because it is too small. If you survey more than enough and get a large enough sample of answers but 100 per cent of one stratification group answers and only half of another group answers, your stratification in results is thrown off and made unreliable. You may therefore have to toss out excess returns from some groups to keep returns from all groups in proportion to the original stratification. But, of course, the best method is to get 100 per cent returns from all groups—an ideal rarely accomplished.

How can you induce people to answer survey questions? Sometimes the respondent is already so much interested, because his benefit is obvious, that you need not point it out to him. You can therefore begin directly with the request for help, as in the direct inquiry letters discussed on pages 40 ff. At other times you have a selling job to do, as in the persuasive requests discussed on pages 241 ff. Whether you are using mail questionnaire, personal interview, or telephone interview makes little difference in the approach. But to misjudge the situation and make a direct inquiry when you need a persuasive request may result in decreased returns.

Fundamentally, your persuasive method is the same as in persuading people to do anything, as in sales and collection letters: *show them a benefit to themselves*. It may be a gift or reward, direct pay-

ment of a fee, or less obvious and less material benefits such as appeals to pride and prestige (but not obvious flattery), appeals to their desire for better service or more efficiency in their kind of work, or the possibility of their getting answers to some questions or solutions to problems that they encounter in their own work. The last two are frequently the best (because they avoid suggesting a bribe or being too mercenary, as the first two might), and they are more immediate and tangible than the others. For instance, a personnel man who has to read lots of poor application letters is likely to answer a textbook writer's or a teacher's questions about what is desired in application letters—because of the possibility that he may as a result get more good applications and thereby make his work easier. A frequent method of inducing answers is the offer of a copy or digest of the survey results.

A big point to remember in making presuasive requests is to show a benefit *before* making the request. Then if you explain who is making the survey and why; make answering as easy, quick, and impersonal as possible; assure respondents that you will honor restrictions they put on use of the information; and ask pointedly just what you want them to do, enough people will usually do it to make your results reliable. Skilled approaches, both oral and written, often bring percentages of answers that surprise the untrained who have tried their hands and failed.

The approach you use will be a major factor in determining your success in getting returns, but the questions you ask and how you ask them will affect both the percentage of returns and the worth of the answers. For that reason writers of questionnaires and people planning interviews need to keep in mind the following main principles used by professionals:

1. Ask as few questions as you can to get the necessary information. Don't ask other people for information you should have dug up for yourself, possibly in the library. And don't ask a question when you can figure the answer from the answers to others. To avoid unnecessary questions—which reduce returns—write down all you can think of, group them, then knock out the duplicates. (There is one kind of permissible duplication: double-check questions which get at the same information from different approaches as a check on the validity of answers.)
2. Ask only what you might reasonably expect to be answered. Requests for percentages and averages are either too much work or over the heads of many people. Questions requiring long memory may frustrate and bring erroneous results. And most people don't even know *why* they do many things.
3. Make your questions as easy to answer as possible (perhaps by providing for places to check); but provide for all likely answers

(at least the "no-opinion" answer and perhaps the blank to be filled as the respondent wants to).

4. Make your questions perfectly clear. To do so, you may sometimes have to explain a bit of necessary background, but the question must be clear. If you ask "Why do you use X peanut butter?" you may get "It is cheapest," "A friend recommended it," and "I like its smooth texture and easy spreading" from three respondents. If you really want to know how the customer first learned of X, you should phrase the question that way to get answers parallel to the second. If you are interested in the qualities that users like (as in the third answer), you should ask that specific question. Questions about *how* cause as many different interpretations as those asking *why*, and require the same kind of careful wording. Also, double-barreled questions (Did you see X and did you like it?) will confuse the reader if he wants to answer one part one way and one the other.
5. Carefully avoid leading questions—questions which suggest a certain answer, such as one to agree with the questioner's obvious view.
6. Insofar as possible, phrase questions to avoid the "prestige" answer—the respondent's answering according to what he feels he ought to think in order to make the best impression.
7. Avoid unnecessary personal prying. When your question is necessary to your basic purpose, make it as inoffensive as possible (for instance, by asking which named *income group* the respondent falls in, if that will serve your purpose, rather than his exact income).
8. Arrange questions in an order to encourage response—not too hard or personal ones at first, related ones together in a natural sequence to stimulate interest and aid memory.
9. Insofar as possible, ask for answers that will be easy to tabulate and evaluate statistically; but when they are important, don't sacrifice shades of meaning or intensity of feeling in the answer for easy handling.

After you have decided on the questions you want answered, your next problem is deciding which type of survey (mail questionnaire, personal interview, or telephone interview) will best serve your purposes. No one is always best. The main bases for your decision are as follows:

1. The kind and amount of information requested. People are more willing to tell you personal information—and more of it—than they are to put personal facts in writing or to do very much writing. The more-or-less anonymity of the interviewer and reluctance to talk long over the telephone with strangers are against the telephone method, but generally people consider talk cheaper and

less dangerous than written statements. On the other hand, factual information (especially statistics, percentages, and averages) which may not be known at the moment may be dug up and written, because the respondent can take a little time with a mail questionnaire.

2. Costs. Within one telephone-exchange area, if your group is not large, the telephone is the cheapest method; but if it involves long-distance charges, they become prohibitive unless the group is small. The mail questionnaire has the advantage of wide geographical coverage at no additional cost; and the bigger the group, the greater the advantage, because copies of a good set of questions can be duplicated at little extra cost. The personal interview is almost always the most costly (mainly in interviewer's time) unless the group is small and close together. You need to consider cost per return, however; and since the mail questionnaire usually brings in the lowest percentage, its advantages may not be so great as at first thought unless a good covering letter and set of questions mailed at an opportune time induce a high percentage of answers.
3. Speed in getting results. If you have to have the answers today, you can get some of them by telephone (and by personal interview if your sample is not too large and the people are close together); but you can't get them by mail. Mail answers will flood you in about four days and dribble in for a week or more after that, unless you make clear that you need the information by a certain time (a point which needs careful justifying to avoid the bad manners of rushing a person to do you a favor).
4. Validity of results. In personal and telephone interviews people may give you offhand answers to get rid of you because the time of the call is inconvenient, and they may answer according to what they think is your view. In mail questionnaires they can choose the most convenient time and are more likely to answer thoughtfully or not at all. But those who choose not to answer may be a special group (say the less educated who don't like to write) and may thereby unstratify your carefully stratified sample. On the other hand, certain segments of the population have fewer telephones than others and thereby skew a telephone sample. And certain kinds of doors (maybe apartment dwellers') are hard to get into for personal interviews. But everybody has a mailing address where a mail questionnaire will reach him. Again, on the other hand, the personal interviewer may pick up supplementary information (such as the general look of economic conditions around the home and incidental remarks of the talker) that will provide a check on answers given—an impossibility by telephone and mail. Either the personal or telephone interview can better clear up any confusion about questions and thereby get appropriate answers. But in view of costs and time,

the mail questionnaire is less likely to be limited to a too-small group or one that is geographically or economically limited.

5. Qualifications of the staff. Some people who can talk well and thus get information may not be able to write a good questionnaire and covering letter; and, of course, the opposite may be true. Even some good talkers have poor telephone voices that discourage that method. And others have disfigurements that discourage personal interviews.

If you select an adequate and stratified sample, induce the people to answer by showing a benefit, ask good questions, and use the most suitable type of survey, you can use surveys to get a great variety of valuable information for use in reports.

## Organizing the Findings

However you collect the necessary facts for your report, you have to organize them for presentation and, if you're writing an analytical report, for your interpretation. You can't well evaluate a bridge hand until you have grouped the cards into the four suits and arranged the cards in order within the suits—mentally if not physically.

Your problem of organizing is probably easier than you suspect, however, because most of the job will have been done for you by conventional practice or by someone who set up a standard plan of reports where you work. Almost any long analytical report uses something like the following arrangement, though many of the parts are optional:

Preliminaries	{ Cover Title page Letter of authorization Letter of transmittal Table of contents Synopsis
Body	{ Introduction Text Conclusions Recommendations
Supplements	{ Appendixes Bibliography Index

Your only problem—and the only one we are talking about here—is the organization of the body, or really just the text. The introduction is usually the first major division of your final outline, and the conclusions and recommendations are usually the last one or two. Be-

cause the text is the essence of the report, you do not have a section heading for it. (If you did, it would be the same as the title of the whole report.) The divisions of the text, then, usually constitute II, III, IV . . . —where you present all your facts, explanations, and reasons.

Basically, organization is the process of putting related things into groups according to common characteristics *and your purpose* (playing poker instead of bridge, for example), and then putting the groups into a desirable sequence. In the process you may find that you have insufficient evidence for some points in your tentative outline and therefore have to get more; that some of your information seems contradictory and has to be reconciled; that some is really irrelevant or too detailed and needs to be discarded; or that you need to revise your tentative outline because the information does not logically classify according to your first plan.

You will want to make sure, also, that things the reader needs to compare are close together.

Certainly you need to check your outline before going further. You may now be able to see enough interpretations of your data to make a sentence outline, as you couldn't earlier because sentences require you to *say something about* the topics. If you can, it will be easier to follow, it will force more careful thinking, and it will give your reader the essence of your report (not just the list of topics discussed but the key statements about those topics).

Whether you use full sentences or noun-phrase topics, close adherence to the following principles is necessary for a good outline:

1. Stick to the one basis of classification implied in your title and purpose as you break down any topic (such as your text) into its parts. On the basis of credit hours earned, college students can be classified as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduates. You can't logically classify them as juniors, Protestants, and Democrats. That shifts bases in helter-skelter fashion from credit hours earned to religion to politics. Thus you have overlapping of topics, whereas the divisions of an outline should be mutually exclusive.

If your title is "Reasons for (or Why) . . .," the major divisions of your text can't logically be anything but the list of reasons. If the title is something like "Factors Influencing . . ." or "Ways to . . .," each major division will have to be one of those factors or ways. The title "Market Factors Indicating Why a Rexwall Drugstore in Savannah Would Sell More than One in Charleston" commits you to show for each subject—Savannah and Charleston—market-factor evidence supporting your thesis. (This does not forbid giving the introduction, conclusions, and recommendations similar major-division status.)

In outlines of comparison leading to a choice, use the criteria (bases on which the choice depends) rather than the subjects (the things between or among which you must choose) as the major divisions. Your criteria are the things on which your choice will stand or fall, and hence they deserve the emphasis. In evaluating a Ford and a Chevrolet, for example, you would use both names frequently in your organization scheme, but neither would be a major heading as such. Your major headings would be the tests you decide to apply: costs (initial and operating—and possibly trade-in value), performance, comfort, and appearance. Under each head you would be obligated to analyze each subject.

2. Follow one good system to show the relationship of all the parts. The most widely used is symbolized with Roman capitals (I, II, III, etc.) for the major topics (which are logical divisions of your title), subdivided as capital letters (A, B, C, etc.), subdivided as Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.), subdivided as lower-case letters (a, b, c, etc.). Various modifications of a decimal system, somewhat like the following, however, are coming into more and more use—especially in the sciences:

1.0	instead of	I.
1.1		A.
1.2		B.
1.3		C.
2.0		II.
2.1		A.
2.11		1.
2.12		2.
2.2		B.
3.0 etc.		III.

3. Cover all categories—that is, all the divisions at any level must add up to the whole. All the capital Roman divisions together must add up to everything covered by the title, and all the capital letters under I must total I. In the example cited under Item 1, if you classify students according to political affiliation, you would most certainly have Republicans as well as Democrats, in addition to others. If you classify according to religion, you would certainly have to include non-Protestants along with Protestants.
4. Use no single subdivisions. If you start to divide I by putting a subhead A, you must logically have at least a B; you can't divide anything without having at least two parts.
5. Organize for approximate balance. That is, try not to let some of your divisions cover huge blocks of your subject and others almost nothing. You probably need to reorganize on a different basis if you have five major divisions (say Roman capitals) and any one of those is more than half of the whole report. Of course, the nature of your subject may force you to imbalance. If you are

writing about American politics, for example, the Democratic and Republican parties will each be bigger parts than all the rest, which you might group under "Others" or "Miscellaneous" for approximate balance. Inevitably some parts in the outline will be treated at greater length than others, but approximate balance is desirable.

6. Consider the psychological effects of the number of parts in any classification. Of course, the nature of the topic may dictate how many you have. For instance, according to credit hours earned, the classes in a university are just five—from freshmen to graduates—no more and no less. In breaking down some topics, however, you have some choice in the number. Having too few suggests that there was no need for the breakdown, or that you have not completed it; having too many puts a strain on the reader's mind to remember them. In some cases you may be wise to shift to a slightly different basis of classification that will lead to a more suitable number of divisions; and in other cases you can group some of the less important classes together.
7. Use parallel grammatical structure for parallel things. All the capital Roman divisions are parallel things; all the capital-letter divisions under one of them are parallel, but not necessarily parallel with those under another Roman division. They may all be complete sentences, all nouns or noun phrases (probably the best), or all adjectives. In discussing the five sections of the usual application data sheet, for example, you would not list "Heading and Basic Facts," "Education," "Experience," "Personal," and "References." All except "Personal" are nouns, but it is an adjective. "Personal Details" would be all right.
8. Put the parts of each breakdown into the sequence most appropriate for your purposes. The over-all sequence or plan of a report is usually one of the following four:
  - a) Direct (sometimes called "deductive"), giving the big, broad point first and then following with supporting details. This plan arouses more interest than some other plans do because it gets to the important things quickly, saves the busy reader time if he wants only the big idea, and provides a bird's-eye view so that he can read the rest more intelligently. It is therefore desirable if the reader is likely to be sympathetic with the big decision or if the writer is such an authority that his unsupported word would be readily accepted at least tentatively. But it risks the danger that the reader will raise objections at first and continue to fight the writer all the way through.
  - b) Inductive (sometimes called "scientific"), giving a succession of facts and ideas leading up to the big conclusions and recommendations at the end. The inductive plan is slow and sometimes puzzling until the conclusion tells where all the de-

tailed facts lead to; but it is necessary in some cases for its strong logical conviction, especially when the reader is known to be opposed to the conclusions and recommendations that are coming.

- c) Narrative (usually chronological accounts of activities). If there is no good reason against it—but there usually is—the narrative style of report is both the easiest to write and the easiest to read. The main objections are that it doesn't allow you to stress important things (it may have to begin with minor details, and the biggest things may be buried in the middle) and it doesn't allow you to bring together related things that have to be seen together for clear significance. The somewhat similar spatial arrangement (from top to bottom, front to back, left to right, or by geographical area) is usually the obvious choice if it is appropriate for the material at all.
- d) Weighted (that is, according to importance). The weighted plan's basic advantage is that it enables you to control emphasis by putting the most important points in the emphatic positions, first and last.

For certain kinds of material and conditions, arrangement according to difficulty or from cause to effect (or the reverse) may be the wise choice.

Whatever the over-all plan of organization, report writers use meaningful headings and subheads, topic sentences or paragraphs, standard transitional words and sentences, and summarizing sentences to indicate organization, to show the coherence of parts in the organization, and to tell the skimming reader the essence of the sections. The summarizing sentences, however, grow naturally out of the interpretation of the facts.

### Interpreting the Facts

If the report is just informational, the writer is ready to write it up when he has organized his facts; but if it is to be analytical, he has then to study the facts and make his interpretation into conclusions and/or recommendations for the boss, as required. Since the reader wants a sound rather than a prejudiced basis for his executive decisions, the report writer's *first consideration* in making the interpretation is objectivity.

Nowhere else in report writing is objectivity more important—or harder to achieve. Since the writer is a person, his thinking is influenced by his whole background and personality; but he strives to be as objective and logical as possible. He avoids the temptation to stretch the truth a bit for dramatic effect. He knows the following two basic kinds of unobjective attitudes to avoid if his report is to be unbiased:

1. Preconception. If the writer thinks he knows the outcome and closes his mind to other possibilities before he collects and evaluates the facts, he may be influenced by that preconception to overlook or undervalue some facts and overstress others.
2. Wishful thinking. If he has a strong desire that the investigation turn out a certain way (because of a money interest or any other kind), he finds it hard not to manipulate facts (like the referee who has bet on the game) to make them lead to the desired result.

In addition to these dangerous attitudes to avoid if he is to be unprejudiced, the report writer keeps in mind (as his *second consideration*) that if his interpretation is to be sound, it must avoid the pitfalls to logical thinking (called "fallacies"). Though some of them—like circular argument and shifting the meaning of terms—are not likely to trap a report writer, the following are dangerous:

1. Using unreliable sources (both books and people), which may be unreliable because of basic prejudice, because they are uninformed, or because they are out of date. Though these things would have been checked in the process of collecting data, they might be checked again in the interpreting process.
2. Making hasty generalizations—that is, drawing conclusions on the basis of too little evidence (maybe too small a sample, too short a trial, too little experience, or just too few facts). The temptation to make hasty generalizations will be reduced if one remembers that sometimes no logical conclusion can be drawn. Certainly he needs to remember that lack of evidence to establish one hypothesis does not prove its opposite.
3. Using false analogies. Though true analogies (comparisons of things that are similar in many ways) are effective devices for explaining, by comparing unknown things to others the reader knows, even at their best they are weak as logical proof. And false analogies (applying principles valid in one case to another case where they don't belong) are tools of shysters and traps to the careless thinker. Essentially the same error results from a false analogy and from a person's putting a thing in the wrong class (say a persuasive-request situation misclassified as a direct inquiry) and applying the principles of the wrong class to it.
4. Stating faulty cause-and-effect relationships, such as
  - a) Assigning something to one cause when it is the result of several.
  - b) Attributing something to an incapable cause (for instance, one that came later).
  - c) Calling something a cause when it is the effect of another cause.
5. Begging the question—just assuming, rather than giving evidence to support, a point that is necessary to the conclusions drawn.

6. Using emotional suasion (usually characterized by strong and numerous adjectives and adverbs, or any kind of emotionally supercharged language like that of a defense attorney pleading with a jury) to influence the reader, instead of depending on logical conviction through marshaling of fact.
7. Failing to distinguish, and make clear to the reader, what is fact, what is opinion, and what is merely assumption.

The report writer's *third consideration* in making his interpretation is discovering the really significant things to point out to the reader. If he avoids basic prejudice prompted by preconception or wishful thinking, avoids the pitfalls of various fallacies, and knows what to look for, he should be able to interpret the facts and draw sound conclusions.

When he does, he should be sure they grow out of the facts, state them pointedly, and itemize them if they run to more than three or four. He can then turn them into practical recommendations that are general or concrete and specific, according to instructions when the report was assigned. Itemization will usually help to make the recommendations desirably pointed, too.

Some bosses want answers to all of what to do, who is to do it, when, and where; others feel that the report writer with so specific a solution to the problem infringes upon their prerogatives of making decisions. But all expect him to show the significance of his facts to the problem. In addition to an organization and presentation of facts that lead to the conclusions, the reader will expect the report writer to point out lesser interpretations along the way.

Causes, symptoms, effects, and cures are always important. So (in terms of graphic statistical data) are high points, low points, averages, trends, and abrupt changes (especially if you can explain their causes). Without going into disturbingly technical statistics, you can probably interest your reader in such measures of central tendencies as the mean (call it average), median (mid-point), and mode (most frequent item). Sometimes you might well use indicators of dispersion, such as standard deviation, range, and the -iles (percentiles, deciles, quartiles).

Certainly, your reader will be interested in comparisons that give significance to otherwise nearly meaningless isolated facts. For instance, the figure \$7,123,191 given as profit for the year has little meaning alone. If you say it's 7 per cent above last year's profit, you add a revealing comparison; and if you add that it's the highest ever, you add another. If your volume of production is two million units, that means less than if you add that you're now fourth in the industry as compared with tenth two years earlier.

Breaking down big figures into little ones also helps to make them meaningful. For instance, the capital investment may be put in

terms of so much per employee, per share of stock, per stockholder, or per unit of production. The national debt becomes more meaningful if given per citizen; the annual budget makes more sense if presented as a per-day or per-citizen cost; library circulation can best be put in terms of number of books per student. Often a simple ratio helps, such as two-fifths (40 per cent) of the national budget is for defense.

Whatever the analysis reveals, the report writer needs to state it precisely. He therefore guards carefully against stating assumptions and opinions as facts. And he selects gradations in wording to indicate the degree of solidity of his conclusions. The facts and analyses will sometimes (but rarely) prove a point conclusively. They are more likely to lead to the conclusion that . . . , or indicate, or suggest, or hint, or point to the possibility, or lead one to wonder—and so on down the scale. Usually you can do better than stick your neck out by claiming to prove things you don't or draw your neck in too far with the timorous last three of these expressions. But phrasing the ideas well is a problem for the fifth and last step in report preparation—writing it up.

### Writing Appropriate Report Style

The final writing-up of the report will not be difficult if the preceding four steps of preparation have been done well. But if your methods of collecting data have been faulty, you're trapped. Our suggestions for a good report style will help only if you have something worthwhile to write.

**Basics of Report Style.** As you have already seen in Item 6, p. 445, report writers use various techniques and devices for communicating clearly, quickly, and easily. Those points and many more are explained in Chapter II. Because almost everything we have said about letter style there applies equally to report style—and the few exceptions are obvious—we recommend that you read that chapter carefully before going on to the special points about report style.

The discussion of "The Communication Process and Semantic Principles" (pp. 13-33) probably applies even more to report writing than to letter writing. We therefore recommend that you study that material thoroughly before proceeding to the following points especially significant in report style.

Even though you have read Part One and Chapter II, several points of basic style deserve a bit fuller treatment for report writers.

*Adaptation* requires that the writer consider not only his primary reader but likely secondary readers. Even though some readers may know the background of the problem and the technical terms of the field, others may not. The good report writer must therefore provide

the explanations necessary for the least informed of important readers.

*Coherence* becomes a greater problem as the length and variety of points in a paper increase. Hence the report writer needs to observe carefully the use of transitional words, previewing topic sentences and paragraphs, and summarizing sentences and paragraphs in the illustrations in the next two chapters. *Coh* in Appendix A and items S3-8 in the *Check List for Complete Analytical Reports* are also helpful.

*Parallelism* is a special pitfall to the unwary report writer because reports so frequently involve series, outlines, and lists. Each is in effect the partition of a whole, the sum of the parts equalling the whole. Hence the law of logic and mathematics—that you sum up, or add, only like things—applies. Thus the breakdown of anything must name all the parts in similar (parallel) grammatical form—usually all nouns, or noun phrases, adjectives, or complete sentences.

*Timing of the verbs* (tense) in reports also often trips a careless report writer. One simple rule that answers most questions of tense is this: *Use the present tense wherever you can logically*. It applies to things that existed in the past, still exist, and apparently will continue to exist for a while. Otherwise, use the tense indicated by the logic of the situation. Thus in writing about your research activity, you say that you *did* certain things (past tense in terms of the time of writing). But in reporting your findings (which presumably are still true), you say “70 per cent answer favorably and 30 per cent are opposed.”

*Ten common faults* listed in American University Professor William Dow Boutwell's study of government reports (and printed in the *Congressional Record*, Vol. 88, Part IX, p. A1468) occur frequently in other reports too:

1. Sentences are too long. Voted unanimously as one of the worst faults in nearly all writings analyzed. Average sentence length in poor government writing varies from 65 to 80 words per sentence. In exceptionally good government writing (*Report to the Nation* by Office of Facts and Figures and President's speeches) average length is from 15 to 18 words per sentence.
2. Too much hedging; too many modifications and conditional clauses and phrases. The master writer will say, “A third of a nation ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-fed.” The amateur will write: “On the whole it may be said that on the basis of available evidence the majority of our population is probably not receiving the proper type of nutriment. . . .” Psychologists say that “conditional clauses cause suspension of judgment as to the outcome of the sentence, and therefore increase reading difficulty.”

3. Weak, ineffective verbs. *Point out, indicate, or reveal* are the weak reeds upon which many a government sentence leans. Writers overuse parts of the verb *to be*. Hundred-word sentences with *was* or *is* as the principal verb are not uncommon.
4. Too many sentences begin the same way, especially with *The*.  
...
5. An attempt to be impersonal, which forces use of passive tenses and indirect phrases. Example: "To determine whether retail sales have been out of line with expectations based on the past relationship of retail volume to income, estimates of retail sales in the first half of each year . . . have been charted against income payments for the same periods, and a line of estimate fitted to the resulting scatter." The good writer would say: "Our statisticians have charted estimates of retail sales, etc., etc."
6. Overabundance of abstract nouns. Such nouns as *condition, data, situation, development, problem, factor, position, basis, case*, dominate the writing of too many government documents. How bright and real writing becomes when picture-bearing nouns take the place of vague ones may be seen from this sentence: "During the lean years when salaries and wages were low and irregular, the people who drifted into the credit-union offices came around because they had dropped behind in their personal and family finances and had to get a loan."
7. Too many prepositional phrases. In a study of reading difficulty, investigators (Drs. Leary and Gray of Chicago University) found that prepositional phrases ("of the data," "under the circumstances," etc.) add to reading difficulty. Yet, samples of government writing show that many officials use at least one prepositional phrase to every 4 words. Samples from good writing contain only one prepositional phrase to every 11 words.
8. Overabundance of expletives. "It is" and "there are" and their variants ruin the opening of many good paragraphs.
9. Use of governmentish or federalese. "Shop words" serve a proper purpose for "shop" audiences. But many government writers make the mistake of talking to the public in technical, office terms, . . . .
10. Tendency to make ideas the heroes of sentences. People think in terms of people and things for the most part. The government official writes in terms of ideas and phenomena only. Hence, when a writer means "Employers refuse to hire older workers in defense industries," he writes instead: "Refusal of employment of older workers continues." In other words, the writer has substituted "refusal," an idea or phenomenon, for "employers"—living people.

**Documentation.** Since a report is usually the basis for an executive decision which may be costly if it is wrong, the executive reader

rightfully expects the report writer to answer two important questions: What are the facts? How do you know? The second question means that the report writer must explain his sources and methods as a basis for the reader's judgment of the report's soundness. Good report style must be not only interesting, clear, correct, and readable, as we have been saying, but it must convince the reader that the information is trustworthy. The only exceptions are in the reports of unquestionable authorities (whose word would be taken at full face value) and in cases where the methods and sources are already known or are clearly implied in the presentation of the facts.

In short reports, the sources and methods are best explained in incidental phrases along with the presentation of data, as in the following:

Four suppliers of long standing report him as prompt pay and . . . .

Standard quantitative analysis reveals 17 per cent carbon . . . .

Analysis of the balance sheet reveals . . . .

In the complete analytical report, the introduction explains methods and mentions printed sources (which are explained more specifically in the bibliography and in footnotes and/or other citations in the text).

At least any report writer except the recognized authority precludes what one reader expressed as "the distrust I have of those people who write as if they had a private line to God."

Since printed materials are frequently used in collecting data for reports, citing those sources is an important means of assuring the reader about the soundness of the facts. On page 452 you have already seen the kinds of information to be put in a *bibliography*, but not bibliography and footnote forms. Unfortunately, the forms are not standardized; so unless you are sure that both you and your reader(s) understand other generally acceptable forms used in your field (for example, in a professional journal), we recommend the following for your bibliography:

Wilkinson, C. W., J. H. Menning, and C. R. Anderson (eds.), *Writing for Business*, Third Edition, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Illinois, 1960.

(Some writers would add "369 pp." to this entry; many reputable writers would not—any more than they would add the price, though that is a common addition in reviews.)

Fixler, Bernie, "What's Wrong with Mailing Lists?" *The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising*, 23:58-60, 68, 84, 87, October, 1960.

OR

Schaleben, Arville, "What Survey Do You Believe?" *Saturday Review*, XLV (May 12, 1962), pp. 72-73.

Note these points particularly:

1. Though some people try to make a distinction between "bibliography" as a complete list of printed materials on the subject and "list of references" as a list of those printed materials actually referred to in the study, the first is much the more frequently used in both senses.
2. The bibliography is the last part besides an index (if there is one) and is usually begun on a new page.
3. Since it is arranged alphabetically by authors' surnames (if the author is known; otherwise by title), the author's surname comes first in each entry. If several authors are involved in one entry, the name of only the first one is inverted. Rarely is a report bibliography extensive enough to justify division into books, periodicals, and other kinds of publications or documents, though such division is sometimes seen in extensive bibliographies.
4. When a book is a compilation of the work of several authors of parts, the editor's name (followed parenthetically by *ed.*) usually takes the author's position.
5. Though older but still-seen forms use a period or colon to separate the author's name from the title and a colon to separate the place of publication from the publisher (in that order), and use periods to separate other parts of the entry, we prefer the publisher-place sequence and comma separation throughout.
6. Titles of *parts* of publications (like newspaper stories, magazine articles, and book chapters) are preferably in quotation marks; titles of whole publications are underscored, preferably with a solid line for ease in both typing and reading. The first word and all others except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions in a title are capitalized (despite the library practice of capitalizing only the first). The comma at the end of a part title is inside the closing quotes. If a question mark or exclamation point ends a title, you simply forget the comma that would otherwise appear there.
7. If the title of a book entry applies to more than one volume or edition, right after the title you indicate the volume and edition you used.
8. If the printed material you used did not give some of the usual bibliographical information such as the place or date of publication, you note the fact with "n.p." or "n.d." to avoid appearing slipshod.
9. Entries for periodicals omit the publisher and place of publication but give the volume number (if on the periodical), the inclusive pages, and the exact date. Newspaper references also

preferably give the column. You merely clutter the entry for a magazine if you write "V." or "Vol." before the volume number or if you give the issue number. By using Arabics for the volume and following with a colon and the pages, you avoid the need for p. or pp. before the page number(s). Hyphens separating page numbers mean inclusive; commas mean interrupted.

10. Entries are preferably begun flush left, single spaced within (unless prepared for printing), indented after the first line, and double spaced between. You may, however, double space between an entry and an optional annotation of a few elliptical clauses indicating the content and/or value of the publication.

At those points in the report text where you make use of printed sources, you also tell the reader about them by *specific references or citations*. One way of doing so is *footnoting*, which is decreasing in use because footnotes heckle readers. A better method for most situations, and now coming into wider and wider use, is to interweave the minimum essentials of a citation subordinately right into the text, like this:

Wilkinson says ("The History and Present Need of Reports," *The ABWA Bulletin*, 19:14, April, 1955) that reports now commonly serve one or more of the following five functions: overcoming separation of management and workers, saving time, overcoming technological incompetence, providing a file record, and supplementing the executive's own ideas with those of others.

For other illustrations, see pages 57, 265, and 670.

Still footnote citations (indicated by matching raised numbers, asterisks, or other symbols in the text and before the footnote) may be necessary in some cases to avoid overcomplex sentences of a long citation interwoven in the text. Or an author may prefer to use footnotes throughout.

The first footnote or interwoven citation, plus whatever bibliographical information may be given in the text, is a complete reproduction of the bibliographical entry with two minor changes: the author's name is in the normal order (given name or initials first), and the page reference is the specific page or pages used for that particular part of the report. Later footnotes to the same work can be shortened forms with the specific page number(s) and just enough information for the reader to identify the source. Usually the author's surname, the title, and the page(s) will do.

Letters and interviews used as sources of information are not usually entered in a bibliography but nevertheless are cited by footnoting or interweaving the information about the giver and the receiver of the information, the form, the date, and any other pertinent facts.

The practice of using Latin abbreviations (such as *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, and *loc. cit.*, to mention only a few) that have long confused many people is disappearing along with footnotes. Except in scholarly writing for other scholars, the trend is toward using English words and a few standard abbreviations like "p." for page and "pp." for pages. People who communicate effectively know that if they want to be understood, they have to use language their readers understand.

Another citation system coming into wider use, especially in science and industry, involves these steps:

1. Numbering the listings in the bibliography after they are arranged in the usual (alphabetical) way,
2. Using the numbers and the specific page numbers, usually separated by colons and enclosed in parentheses, at the points in the report requiring documentation—usually just before the periods at the ends of sentences, and
3. Using a standard footnote to explain the first citation, somewhat like:

<sup>1</sup> In these parenthetical citations, the number before a colon refers to the item with that number in the bibliography and the number(s) following a colon refer(s) to the page(s) in that item.

**Objectivity in Presentation.** Clearly, the report reader expects the writer to demonstrate that he has been as objective as is humanly possible in collecting the data, in organizing and interpreting them, and finally in writing them up.

That does not mean, however, that you must follow an old rule and use impersonal style (which is sometimes erroneously called "objective" style). You can be just as objective when saying "I think such and such is true" as when saying "Such and such seems to be true" or even "Such and such is true." The second and third versions mean only that the writer thinks something is true. The only sound objection to the first version is that it wastes two words, not that it is personal style.

Whatever justification there is for recommending impersonal style in reports, as many books do, is that methods and results are usually the important things, and therefore they, rather than the persons who did the research, deserve emphasis as subjects and objects of active verbs.

But since things happen because people make them happen, the most natural and the clearest, easiest, most interesting way to tell about them is to tell who does what. A report about research done by its writer therefore naturally includes *I's*; and if the writer keeps his reader(s) in mind, it also naturally includes *you's*. To omit them is unnatural and usually dull, because the writer goes out of his way

to avoid the natural subjects of active verbs or uses too many inactive ones and leaves out the most basic element of an interesting, humanized style—*people doing things*.

Because they are professionally trained, constantly practicing, and usually writing about people doing things (though in the third person, which is considered a part of impersonal style), newspaper men do often write well. An equally trained and practiced report writer (a rarity) *can* by great care write interestingly in impersonal style. But most report writers find it unnatural and difficult. Unless they exercise great care, it usually leads them into lots of awkward, wordy, and weak passive-voice constructions; it gives away the third leg (Frequent Personal References) to Rudolf Flesch's three-legged stool of easy readability so that the stool falls; and it DOES NOT gain objectivity.

The Japanese gained no objectivity—did not dodge the wishful thinking any more than they established the wishful sinkings—by reporting in impersonal style during World War II that “Eighty-seven American ships have been sunk in the Pacific.” What they did gain was weak, awkward, and dull passive voice. They might better have gained the interest and readability value of personal references—without increasing the basic prejudice—by reporting to the American troops that “We have sunk 87 of your ships.”

Strangely the strongest promoters of impersonal style are people who pride themselves on being scientific. They usually also insist that writing should avoid any kind of exaggeration on the true state of things. But they then argue that impersonal style gives the reader more confidence in their statements. When one of them draws a conclusion, therefore, he wants to say “It was concluded that . . . ,” as if some omniscient oracle had drawn the conclusion, when all he means is “I concluded that . . . .” If the impersonal style *does* gain reader confidence, it is dishonest reporting; if not, that argument for it falls flat.

Actually, more destructive to objectivity than the use of a personal style is the use of too many or too strong adjectives and adverbs, or any kind of feverish, high-pressure, hot-under-the-collar writing. Such a heightened style—using emotional connotations, fancy figures of speech, and other techniques of oratory—has its place where the author feels deeply and wishes his reader to feel deeply about the subject; but it is out of fashion today, is sometimes distrusted, and is inappropriate in reports anyway because both writer and reader are expected to think hard rather than feel deeply.

Simply put, then, our advice on personal versus impersonal style is this: Find out whether your primary reader thinks reports have to be in impersonal style. If so, give it to him as best you can while

1. avoiding "It is" and "There are,"
2. putting most of your verbs in the active voice, and
3. picturing people (other than yourself or the reader, of course) taking the action of as many as possible of your verbs.

But any time your primary reader will let you, write naturally but calmly and reasonably. Where the natural way to express an idea involves an *I* or a *you*, use it. Don't let anybody talk you into writing "The writer," referring to yourself.

Except for the fact that letter style allows more use of emotional suasion than report style does, the discussion of style in Chapter II applies to reports as well as letters. Report writers certainly use commonly understood words, short sentences so direct that they require little punctuation, short paragraphs so direct that they require few transitional words, and itemizations. But since the report writer often covers so many more topics, and at greater length, he has a bigger job of showing the relationship of parts to one another and each to the whole. In addition, report writers also make more extensive use than letter writers of two other techniques of presenting ideas clearly, quickly, and easily for the reader: headings and subheads and non-verbal means of communication.

**Headings and Subheads.** Because they are usually longer than letters and because the reader may want to recheck certain parts, reports use headings and subheads, in addition to topic and summarizing sentences, to show the reader the organization, where he has been, and where he is going. For the same reasons and purposes, we have used headings in this book. If you have not thought about them already in those lights, for illustration flick back through some parts of the book with which you are well acquainted and see if they don't serve those purposes.

Skill in using heads and subheads can be a valuable technique in your writing, not only of reports but of anything else that is very long—maybe even long letters.

The only reasonable test of how far to go in putting in subheads is this: Will they help the reader? If so, put them in; if not, leave them out.

Despite the fact that headings and subheads are great helps to readers, no single system of setting them up is in universal use. More important than what system you use is that you use some system consistently and that the reader understand it. Most readers understand and agree on the following principles:

1. A good heading should indicate clearly the content below it, should have reader interest, and should be as brief as possible

without sacrificing on either of the other two requirements. Trying to keep titles too short, however, frequently leads to sacrifice of exactness. Usually a short heading is too broad (includes more than the discussion below it covers), or it tells nothing about the topic. Of course, you do not always want the heading to try to tell any more than the topic to be discussed, lest the reader fall for that dangerous thing—a little learning—and read only the head. But in mass communications such as newspapers and magazines, you feel lucky to get most readers to read even the headings; so you tell as much as you can in them. Note the difference, in examples from annual reports, between "Profits" and "Profits up 8% from last year," and between "Position in the industry" and "Position in industry changes from 8th to 4th." In other reports where some readers might only skim, you can help them a lot by making your headings tell the big point about the topic instead of just naming the topic to be discussed.

2. The form and position of the head must make its relative importance clear at a glance. That is, headings for all divisions of equal rank (say the Roman-numbered ones in an outline) must be in the same type form and position on the page, but different from their superiors (of which they are parts) and from their inferiors (their subdivisions). Putting heads of different levels in the same form and position is confusing; it misrepresents the outline.
3. Centered heads are superior to side heads in the same form (compare second- and third-degree heads following); heads in capitals are superior to those in caps and lower case; and heads above the text are superior to those starting on the same line with the text (compare third- and fourth-degree heads below).
4. Heads should not be depended on as antecedents for pronouns or as transitions. The one word *This* referring to an immediately preceding head is the most frequent offender. Transitions between paragraphs and between bigger subdivisions should be perfectly clear if the headings were removed.
5. In capital-and-lower-case heads capitalize the first word and all others except articles (*a, an*, and *the*), conjunctions (for example *and, but, for, because*), and prepositions (such as *to, in, of, on, with*).

Those principles are illustrated and further explained in the five-level breakdown following. If you need a further breakdown for your report, you can type the first heading in spaced CAPITALS and move each level of heading up one notch. Note that *above* second- and third-degree heads the spacing is *two* more than the double spacing of the discussion and that *below* them it is *one* more than the text spacing.

## FIRST-DEGREE HEADING

The title of your whole report, book, or article is the first-degree heading. Since there is only one title, no subhead should be written in the same form. As illustrated here, the title is written in the most superior form and position. The heading above this paragraph is a good choice for a first-degree heading.

### Second-Degree Heading

If you use solid capitals centered on the page for the first-degree heading, a good choice for the second-degree headings is caps and lower case, as illustrated here. Preferably, it and any other uncapitalized head should be underscored to make it stand out, though some people say it should be only if its immediate superior is. Of course, if you do not need the five-level breakdown illustrated here, you could start with this form for the first-degree head.

Third-degree heading

To distinguish the third-degree headings from their superiors, you may wisely choose to change position and put them at the left margin above the text, underscore them to make them stand out, and write them in initial-cap form (as here) or in cap and lower case (which would require capitalizing the H in Heading).

Fourth-degree heading.—For further breakdowns into a fourth level, you may place headings at the paragraph indentation on the same line with the text and write them as caps and lower case or as straight lower case. They definitely need to be underscored and separated from the first sentence, preferably by a period and dash, as here. Some people drop the dash. This form of head saves space.

The fifth-degree headings can be well handled as integral parts of the first sentence of the first paragraph about a topic. If they are underscored (which means italic type when printed), they will stand out sufficiently without further distinctions in form.

**Presentation of Quantitative Data.** Most reports make considerable use of quantitative data. Consequently, as a report writer you need to know how to present figures for clear, quick, and easy comprehension. Your reader will usually want the figures on measurable topics you discuss; and unless he has made clear that he wants only the facts, he probably will want your interpretations showing what the figures mean (conclusions) and what you think should be done about them (recommendations). Even if he has the ability to make the interpretations himself, he likely will want you to make them—for possible ideas he might not see and for economy of his time.

The following brief suggestions are designed to help you present quantitative data the way most report readers want them.

1. Make sure your figures are reliable by checking your sources and derivations of them. And when you present an average, make clear whether it is the mean, the median, or the mode.
2. Write isolated quantities in one of the standard ways explained under **Fig** in Appendix A.
3. Insofar as possible, avoid cluttering your paragraphs with great masses of figures. Tables are better if necessary. Ordinarily, however, extensive tables are not necessary to the reader's understanding of the text but are in a report to show that you really have the facts. In that case, put the table in the appendix and refer to it specifically in the introduction or text; then follow points 4–7 for presenting necessary figures in the text.
4. Put necessary statistical information as close as possible to the point in the text where it is most pertinent. The reader will likely refuse to flip pages back and forth to find a table, or at least will resent having to do so.
5. Present the key figures as simply as possible. Usually some ratio, rank, or difference is more important than the raw data. Instead of a gross of \$2,301,460.70 and expenses of \$2,124,101.40, the simple figures  $2\frac{1}{3}$  and  $2\frac{1}{4}$  million tell the story easier. The ratio  $1/12$  or about 8 per cent for the net certainly reads easier than \$177,359.30 and is probably the more important figure. Moreover, except in bookkeeping and highly technical research, such rounded and simplified figures are precise enough for most purposes. Engineers regularly use slide rules that are not accurate even to the first decimal place. Indeed rounded figures in most cases are as accurate as the unrounded ones on which they are based. The means of arriving at most large figures are not accurate enough to make the last few digits anything but a bogus precision and a hindrance to readability.

Another way of increasing readability is to break big figures down into so much per . . . (whatever is an appropriate divider). If the divider is the number of persons involved (employees, stu-

dents, citizens, for example), you also gain interest by humanizing the presentation.

6. Small tables (usually called spot tables), perhaps using key figures based on extensive data in an appendix, are not only easy to read but can be put close to the relevant discussion. Use them freely.
7. Help your reader by pointing out highs, lows, averages, trends, ranges, and exceptions or extremes. They are not always readily apparent, especially to the many readers who are not accustomed to analyzing statistical data; but they are usually important, especially if you can also explain their causes and/or effects.

**Nonverbal Assists to Words.** Since reports so frequently present statistics (quantitative data), designs, organizational plans, and the like, they make much use of charts, graphs, pictograms, drawings, and maps as well as tables. But in most cases these devices only assist, not replace, words. Interpretation of graphics is not one of the three *R*'s learned by everybody. So most graphics help to explain and/or support the text only if the text helps them by telling the reader how to look at them and what they mean.

The usual procedure is a few words of interpretation, interweaving a reference to the table or the graphic presentation, then use of the best type of graph for the purpose, and then further comment on (interpretation of) the presentation.

It is important to put the table/graph and the comment close together so that the reader can see both at once; each one supplements the other; neither is complete by itself.

The graphics need to be carefully labeled as a whole and by parts, and provided with a key if necessary. Variations in colors, shadings, and kind of line (solid *versus* broken, for example) are common key devices for distinguishing the different kinds of data.

Complete discussion of the uses, advantages, and disadvantages of the various types of graphics would require more space than is appropriate here; but the following suggestions will be useful:

1. Use line graphs (perhaps marking the tops of columns in a bar chart) to represent trends according to time. Usually the perpendicular axis should represent volume and the base (or horizontal) axis should represent time. Two or more lines, usually in different colors, can show relative positions as well as the position of each at any given time.

Unless you are using several lines or bars (but not so many as to confuse!) and are interested only in their comparative values rather than their individual changes, be sure to start at 0 as the base. If, for example, you use 40 as the base of the quantity scale and we assume that the first year represented is 50 and the second 60, the second year appears to have doubled the first, whereas

it has increased only 20 per cent—as it would and should look on base 0.

Providing grid lines will help avoid optical illusions and give the reader a quick and precise idea of just where a line is at any given time in the graph.

Remember, also, to use faired (curved) lines for continuously changing data and straight lines to connect plotted points of data that change by steps, such as enrollments in a university by semesters.

2. Use segmented bars or pie charts moving clockwise from 12:00 to represent the proportions in the breakdown of a whole. Usually the color or shading of sections distinguishes the parts (which should not be confusingly numerous), and they are labeled with both the raw figures and the percentages for precision.
3. Use maps for geographical distribution of almost anything; organization charts of rectangles arranged and connected to show lines of authority and communication; flow charts, showing movement and stages in processing; blueprints, giving precise sizes and relationships; and photographs, picturing accurate size, texture, and color. All are useful graphic devices in their places if they are kept simple enough for easy reading and if they concentrate on the point under discussion.
4. Use symbolic pictograms (like little men representing workers or bags of money representing profits) to add interest, especially for nontechnical readers, when you have the time and money and are preparing a report in enough copies to justify the costs. But keep all the little characters the same size (though each may represent any quantity) and vary the *number* of them to represent different total quantities. Otherwise you mislead because the volume in the pictogram involves a third dimension (depth perspective) not shown in the pictogram. Of two cylinders representing oil production, for example, one actually twice as big as the other looks only slightly bigger because of the unseen third dimension. Even in the best usage, pictograms are not precise unless you write in the exact quantities. Pictograms should be drawn to avoid prejudicial side messages, too—such as the unfavorable and irrelevant suggestion that all welfare cases are diseased, decrepit, or dumb in the drawings of a pictogram designed to represent the changing *number* of welfare cases.

Beyond that, the writing-up of a report depends on the particular form to be used; and the form you choose should be the one best adapted to the situation, as explained along with the illustrations in Chapters 14 and 15.

[*All the cases on reports are at the end of Chapter XV.*]

## XIV. Short Informational and Analytical Reports

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Letter Reports  
Memoranda  
Justification Reports  
Progress Reports  
Credit Reports  
Annual Reports  
Short Analytical Reports

THE FORM in which a report is written should be determined by the situation—mainly who its reader is, its purpose, and its length. This chapter explains and illustrates various kinds of short reports written in the most important forms.

Like all reports, short ones can be classified on various bases. Their most common names, however, point to two bases: form and content. To avoid making up new names for them, in this chapter we list and discuss them by their common names, though that system does not provide a strictly logical classification.

Because the reports apparently named by content have become pretty well associated with certain forms, however, the seeming violation of logic in classification is more apparent than real. The primary basis of classification here is therefore form. (Exceptions are explained where they apply.) Yet the primary emphasis is not on learning the forms themselves but on the uses of different forms and the information, organization, interpretation, and style in the reports.

The illustrations are NOT presented as perfect reports, and certainly are NOT to be followed slavishly or copied parrot-like. At best, they show acceptable content, form, and general style for their particular situations as starters to your thinking on those points for your situation.

Though we recognize that strictly informational, periodic reports are the most numerous kind, we do not devote our main attention to them because they are mostly printed forms to be filled in with figures and perhaps a little other writing. They are therefore real

report-writing jobs only to the people who devise the original forms. We therefore treat the commonly used forms which do raise real report-writing problems.

**Letter Reports.** Many short reports, usually one to four pages, are written in regular business letter form. Usually they go between organizations rather than between departments of the same organization, where memoranda are more likely.

Since the letter report is likely to be longer than the usual letter, however, and since it *is* a report, it may take on these special features of reports, while otherwise using the form explained in Chapter I:

1. More than usually careful organization.
2. Objectivity (absence of emotional suasion, viewing both sides of the situation, enough interweaving or implying of methods and sources to assure soundness).
3. Use of appropriate subject lines, subheads, and itemizations where helpful.
4. Use of graphic devices where helpful and economically feasible.

Depending on whether the message will likely meet with reader approval, disappointment, or resistance, the letter report should follow the A, B, or (rarely) C Plan, as explained on pp. 102-6 and illustrated thoroughly in Chapters V, VII, and VIII respectively. More specifically, any of the organizational plans discussed on pp. 462-63 may apply to a letter report.

Though a letter report, like any other, needs to convince the reader that its facts are reliable, it rarely needs a separate section or even a separate paragraph explaining authorization, purpose, and methods and sources used in collecting data. Most likely the writer was asked for the information because he was known to have it in his head or at his fingertips. In other words, he was already recognized as an expert on the subject. If not, he may have been told just how to study the problem. Or, for the simple problems appropriate to letter reports, the methods and sources are frequently so obvious as to need no explanation. If any explanations are necessary, they can usually be given best as incidental phrases interwoven right along with the information: ". . . seems to be the best solution to your problem of . . ."; "Inspection of . . . reveals . . ."; or "Legal precedent in cases like . . . is clearly . . ."; or "Microscopic examination shows . . .".

Indeed letter reports are like other reports except for the form which gives them their name, the limits of length and hence of topics to which they are adapted, and their almost necessarily personal

style. A letter in impersonal style would be almost a joke. Though we do not think any kind of report should necessarily be in impersonal style, even those people who do will almost certainly approve a personal style in letter reports.

Two common types of letter reports are those about job and credit applicants, already discussed on pp. 150 and 151-52, respectively. You should study both the explanations and the illustrations. You notice that both the illustrations use subject lines effectively. Note, too, that both begin immediately with important information because they face no problem of reader disappointment or resistance.

Personnel and credit reports, however, do have the legal problem of avoiding libel suit by referring to the request for information, trying to be fair to both parties, and asking confidential use of the information. Notice how the two illustrations handle that problem.

Those two kinds should be informational reports, in that they should rely on facts and subordinate or entirely eliminate opinions—certainly unsupported recommendations. But letter reports may be either informational or analytical. In some cases they are more nearly directives than reports, but directives are more likely to be in memo form.

A report that is quite similar to the preceding except in being analytical (first paragraph) instead of informational is the following:

Dear Mr. Linton: Subject: Charles R. Sheppard

The best suggestion I can give in answer to your request for advice is that you ask Sheppard for an explanation of his unofficial withdrawal from school here and act accordingly.

He enrolled at XXXX University for his second year last fall. For reasons which we do not know, he apparently attended no classes after the Christmas holidays. Consequently his semester grades for all five courses he was taking were F's, as shown on the transcript you have.

Since he was registered under PL 346, I have found from the local Veteran's Administration Office that he did check out there by letter on January 4. He apparently thought that this was an official withdrawal from school.

If Sheppard could give a reasonable explanation of his actions during January, he would be welcome back here. His grades for the first year's work averaged a strong C.

If you prefer that we handle the situation, however, we will change his F's to N's and send you a new transcript on Sheppard's satisfactory explanation of his unofficial withdrawal here.

Because the message is somewhat bad news and the reader may be reluctant to take the suggested action, the following report uses the

more convincing inductive rather than the faster-moving deductive plan. You will note, too, that it uses no subject line. To do so would defeat the psychological purpose of the inductive plan. As you always should when you have a step-by-step procedure or a series of pointed, emphatic principles, qualities, conclusions, or recommendations to convey, this report uses itemization effectively at the end.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

In our audit of your company's books on January 16, we discovered that for years the total net profit has been added to surplus.

This procedure is usually correct. For the past three years you have had a bond agreement, however, which specifies that a sinking-fund reserve of three per cent of the par value of the bonds must be set up annually out of surplus. That agreement is legally binding. Moreover, state law requires you to set up the reserve in this situation. The remaining profit, of course, can be added to surplus.

Laws of this type have been enacted to protect investors and brokers who desire a true picture of the financial condition of companies.

The laws also give you protection. The setting up of a separate reserve prevents the unlawful declaration of dividends by the directors. In other words, the proper presentation of surplus figures is an aid to better management.

We therefore recommend that you

1. Take immediate steps to set up the reserve,
2. Transfer to it now, from surplus, 3 per cent of the par value of the bonds for each of the past three years, and
3. Regularly each year for the duration of the bond agreement transfer the required amount from surplus to the reserve.

Both the shortness and the nature of the material made divisional headings useless in the preceding illustrations of letter reports. Conversely, both length and content make headings almost mandatory for effective presentation in the following. It is a reply to a school superintendent's request that recent graduates tell him about college expenses for passing on to seniors.

Dear Mr. Loudenslager:

I certainly was glad to receive your letter of January 20. It is nice to know that John is not finding school as hard as he thought it was going to be.

Here is the information you requested. These costs are based on one semester here for the male student. Though I have not kept de-

tailed records, my figures are more realistic than the somewhat outdated ones in the catalog you have.

Being neither plush nor poor, I have spent according to the Typical column; but I have classmates whose expenses more nearly match both the Liberal and Conservative figures.

ESTIMATED EXPENSES TABLE

	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Typical</i>	<i>Liberal</i>
Course fee	\$000	000	000
Room and board	000	000	000
Books and supplies	00	00	00
Physical education	00	00	00
R.O.T.C.	00	00	00
Clothing	00	00	00
Laundry and dry cleaning	00	00	00
Transportation	00	00	000
Incidentals	00	00	000

***FIXED EXPENSES***

*Course fee*.—Though the regular course fee is \$000, certain courses and curricula like music, law, medicine, and veterinary medicine do require extra fees. Insofar as I know, these extra fees have not changed from the catalog you have.

*Physical education*.—All students are required to take two years' credit in gym. The \$10 fee is for the first semester only.

*R.O.T.C.*.—All able-bodied male students are required to take two years' credit in military science. The fee will be returned when the equipment is returned after completion of the course.

***VARIABLE EXPENSES******Living Expense***

*College residence halls*.—Adequate dormitories are available on the campus. Meals are served in the dining rooms seven days a week. Room and board is \$000 a semester. The resident is required to supply linen, toweling, and pillow.

*Fraternities*.—Room and board in a fraternity may vary from a low of \$000 to a high of \$000. The average is about \$000.

*Co-operatives*.—If a student desires, he may join a "co-op," in which a group may defray part of the cost of living by all helping with the

work. Room and board in a co-op usually runs to about \$000 a semester.

*Individual room.*—Rooms in approved homes cost about \$00–\$00 a semester, two men to a room. Food in local restaurants costs about \$000–\$000. Only graduate students and married students are allowed to have apartments.

*Working for meals.*—Male students who want to do so can nearly always find jobs working for their meals in dormitory dining rooms or in local restaurants.

*Clothing.*—Some students who attend college are forced to buy entirely new wardrobes. Others may get along quite well for some time with what they have. So clothing expense is highly variable, as my figures in the table show. For most students college clothing costs should be only a little more than for high-school clothing.

*Laundry and dry cleaning.*—Facilities are available for the student to do his own laundry in the dormitories. Several laundromats are also convenient to the area. Dry-cleaning prices are the same as at home. Again an individual can spend as much or as little as he chooses.

#### *Transportation*

*At school.*—The majority of the activities are located on the campus within walking distance. Bus fare to town is 30 cents round trip. Taxis are also available. The student who expects to have his own car will find that a jalopy is not the thing here and that keeping a respectable car can hardly cost less than \$450 a semester. Depreciation alone could cost that much without anything for insurance, upkeep, and gasoline.

*To-and-from school.*—Most of your students will find it inconvenient as well as expensive to go home more than twice a semester. The round-trip bus fare, the cheapest way, is \$16.80.

#### *Incidentals*

*Necessities.*—Students need a small amount of money to spend while out with a group for coffee, cokes, shows, and the like. Also there is the ever-present emergency of haircuts, shoestrings, razor blades, tooth paste, etc. Normally one may expect to spend \$000 a semester on such things.

*Dating.*—Taking a girl out for an evening can cost a lot of money, or it can be done fairly inexpensively. Some of the larger dances can cost up to \$30 for the evening. The item is highly flexible.

If anyone in this year's senior class has any specific questions about this school, I'll try to answer as best I can. One thing you can safely tell all who are thinking about coming here: they had better learn

to write correctly and to handle simple math or they will be in trouble.



Except for Item 1 (on form), the **Check List for Memos** at the end of the chapter applies equally to memo and letter reports.

**Memoranda.** Just as letter reports are more likely for communicating between organizations, memoranda are more frequently used within the same organization. Along with a stock of letterheads, among the supplies of almost any well-run office is a pad of printed memo forms (usually half sheets  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$  turned either way). The printed headings used in the illustrations of memoranda in this section show the main variations. Item 1 of the **Check List for Memos** (p. 504) gives further details of form.

Except for the differences in form and use, memoranda follow the instructions already given for letter reports. They are, however, inclined (1) to be ephemeral and hence less formal (often being handwritten without carbon), (2) to make even greater use of itemization, and (3) to become directives going down the chain of command.

One of the most common and effective techniques is itemization. Numbering each paragraph almost forces the writer into careful organization, precise statement, and conciseness.

Two simple memos showing slightly different forms are the following:

January 12, 196X

TO: All Occupants of Business Administration  
Building, Journalism Building, University  
College Building, Forestry Building

FROM: R. F. Noonan, Buildings and Utilities  
Department

SUBJECT: Interruption of Electrical Service

The electricity will be off in the above buildings Tuesday, January 13, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Temporary electric service will be provided for lights in main departmental offices and for all telephones.

All electricity will be off for approximately one-half hour from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. for the connection and removal of the temporary service.

## UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

DATE Jan. 20

MEMO TO: Andrea

FROM: Clll

SUBJECT: Work for today

Since I have an appointment downtown during your working hours, please

- 1) record the grades of the attached papers in my grade book.
- 2) check the revised class lists against my rolls and return the lists to the Registrar with proper notations.
- 3) get the Congressional Record vol. 88, Part 9, from the Library and copy Congressman Hill's comments on p. A-1486, and
- 4) make a table showing percentages, by class and major, of students on the ETH 255 lecture lists (both lists in one table).

The U.S. military services make extensive use of memos, with their own slight modifications as indicated in the following illustration:

HEADQUARTERS  
SECOND UNITED STATES ARMY  
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland

AIAAG-CP Byron, Kenneth Hugh

31 July 19xx

SUBJECT: Promotion as a Reserve Commissioned Officer of the Army under the Reserve Officer Personnel Act of 1954

THRU: Commanding General A-7 May XX  
XXI US Army Corps (Reserve)  
B-None

TO: Captain Kenneth Hugh Byron, 02 203 034,  
MPC, USAR  
1812 West Grace Street  
Richmond 20, Virginia

1. The Secretary of the Army has directed that you be informed that by direction of the President you are promoted as a Reserve commissioned officer of the Army effective on the date shown after A above to the grade in the branch and component shown in address above.

2. Promotion service for promotion to the next higher grade will be computed from the effective date of this promotion, unless there is a date shown after B above, in which case it will be computed from that date.

3. No acceptance or oath of office is required. Unless you expressly decline this promotion within 60 days, your assumption of office will be effective as shown after A above.

4. A commission evidencing your promotion is inclosed which will be returned in case you decline the promotion.

5. Authority: AR 135-155, paragraph 15.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl  
DD Form 1A (Commission)  
Copies Furnished:

G. W. WILLIAMS  
Captain, AGC  
Asst Adj Gen

TAG  
CG, XXI USA Corps  
MRU  
File

## 490 COMMUNICATING THROUGH LETTERS AND REPORTS

Probably the biggest user of memos is the biggest business in the world—the United States government. It has its own form and its own directions for using the form, as illustrated and applied in the accompanying memo directive (reprinted from *Secretarial Handbook*, Tennessee Valley Authority, rev. ed., 1960, pp. II-10a, II-10c).

TVA 64 (OS.4.59)

United States Government

MEMORANDUM

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

TO : Maybelle Campbell, Reproduction and  
Stenographic Unit, 421 Wall Avenue,  
Knoxville (2)

FROM : Carl Angle, Office Methods Staff, 619 LB,  
Chattanooga

DATE : June 15, 1960

SUBJECT: STYLE FOR INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUMS

Attention: Yetta Konigsberg

This is an illustration of the office memorandum. Its use is described in the enclosed copy of the Secretarial Handbook. A style sheet for the half-size memorandum is also enclosed.

The items in the heading begin two spaces from the preceding colons, and the body of the memorandum uses the left margin established by the placement of the heading. The right margin should be at least one inch but not more than one and one-half inches.

If two lines are necessary in the "To" or "From" line, the second line is indented two spaces and the break is made between units of the address. But the line should be extended into the margin if that will avoid two lines.

Titles of courtesy, Mr., Mrs., and Miss, are omitted before the names in the heading, but professional titles such as Dr. are used. Job titles are not used when the organization unit provides a satisfactory address. The "To" and "From" lines should be parallel in content. No

punctuation is used at the ends of the lines in the heading.

The text begins on the fourth line below the subject. (If additional space is needed on the half-size memorandum, begin on the second line below the subject.) When an attention line is used, it is typed on the fourth line below the subject, with no end punctuation, and the text begins two lines below the attention line.

Block style is used for memorandums; that is, paragraphs are not indented. Single spacing is used within the paragraphs, double spacing between them. If headings are used in a memorandum (as for a progress report), side headings and paragraph headings begin at the left margin. If numbered paragraphs or items appear in the memorandum:

1. The first line begins at the left margin. (Note that in indented style, as for formal reports, the first line --the number-- is indented five spaces.)
2. Additional lines are aligned with the first word in the paragraph, as shown in this sample.

2

Maybelle Campbell  
June 15, 1960

#### STYLE FOR INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUMS

This page illustrates the setup for the second and succeeding pages of a memorandum. Each page after the first is numbered with an Arabic numeral on the fourth line from the top of the page, flush with the left margin. The addressee's name is typed two lines below the page number, and the date immediately below the name. The subject is typed two lines below the date, and the text begins on the fourth line below the subject.

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No complimentary close is used. No signature line is used since the signer's name appears on the "From" line and his initials or signature in the blank space below the text is sufficient. But if the signer requires a line, it is typed on the fourth line below the text, with the name under the line.

The attachments are identified in the memorandum; therefore, they are not listed in the attachment notation, but the word Attachments is followed by 2 to show how many pieces of material are attached.

Carbon copies of this memo are to go to Billie Burt and Lucy Somerville. Their names appear in alphabetic order. The address must be given for each person listed.

The word Attachments in parentheses after the name and address indicates that attachments (the same as those sent with the original memorandum) are being sent to Mrs. Burt with her copy of the memo. Two copies of the memo without the attachments are being sent to Miss Somerville, as indicated by the number in parentheses following the name. If an extra copy is being sent to the addressee, (2) is typed at the end of the "To" line.

1

2 JF:DG

3 Attachments: 2

3 CC: Billie Burt, 115 AB, Wilson Dam (Attachments)  
Lucy Somerville, 1108 Market, Chattanooga (2)

The following memo on a company's printed form (essentially the form used by the U.S. government) shows a usual layout, typical A Plan, and a typical problem:

### OFFICE MEMORANDUM—Acme Insurance Company

Date : 2/10/59

To : Mr. J. G. DeWolfe, General Manager

From : R. R. Fortune, Safety & Health

Subject: HOW TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM CAUSED BY RESPIRATORY DISEASES

1. Conclusion.--Our recent high rate of absenteeism seems to be a result of too low humidity.

Absentees reported colds or other respiratory diseases as the cause in 73% of the cases.

2. Humidity in relation to respiratory diseases.-- According to the U.S. Public Health Service, the higher the humidity in buildings the lower the rate of respiratory diseases. You can see this relationship in Figure 1 on the attached pages. The explanation is that a high humidity prevents excessive cooling from evaporation of skin moisture.
3. Desirable humidity-temperature relationships.-- Although our 70 degrees is considered the best temperature, it isn't warm enough for most people unless the humidity is about 40. Ours is 20. As Figure 2 of the USPHS study shows, a humidity above 50 makes most people feel clammy and below 30 causes them to feel a dryness in their noses and throats.
4. Recommended corrective steps.--To reduce absenteeism, improve the health of our personnel, and enhance employee relations, I suggest the following:
  - a) Raise the humidity to 40 by having a tinner make a pan with the necessary evaporation surface for each radiator (to be concealed from view by the radiator covers).
  - b) Assign the janitors the job of keeping water in the pans.
  - c) Purchase one temperature-humidity guide for each office. Besides providing a constant check on room conditions, these meters will remind the employees that you have done something about their comfort and health.

Prices range from \$2 to \$200. The cheapest ones are likely to be inaccurate; but the Wechsler at \$4.50 carries the recommendation of Consumer Reports. It looks like a small clock with two red hands pointing to temperature and humidity scales. Hardware, department, mail-order, and specialty stores carry it in varied colors to fit the decor of any office.

~~~~~

The **Check List for Memos** at the end of the chapter applies equally to letter reports (except the part on form, of course).

**Justification Reports.** Another kind of short report often using memo form has its own special name. Of course any analytical report could be called a justification report because it draws conclusions (and makes recommendations if wanted) and presents facts to justify them. But, as used in report writing, the justification report is a special kind.

Almost invariably it is an initiating report in which the writer makes an original proposal, rather than a study that has been requested, though it may well be the requested full write-up of a suggestion that has been dropped in a suggestion box.

It is deductive (Plan A) presentation that gives the recommendation immediately, followed by concise statements of the most important considerations and conclusions, before giving detailed explanations and supporting facts. Thus it quickly gives the busy reader all he needs to know *if he trusts the writer*. Probably that point is the main reason for the increasing popularity of the justification report among executives. But if the reader wants to read the whole explanation, the plan is still good. He can follow the details better by having already read the conclusions and recommendations—that is, what the details lead to.

You will provide good organization and coverage if you set up the five standard headings and do the following in this order:

- a) State the purpose in one sentence. The first part, in phrase or dependent-clause structure, should mention a benefit. The second part should be the recommendation in an independent clause.
- b) State the cost and saving in no more than two sentences. Don't delay the fast movement by explaining.
- c) In a third part called "Procedure" or "Method of Installation," cover concisely such things as necessary space, men, training, special materials, time, and interruptions of work. Usually one to three sentences will do.
- d) Itemize the conclusions, state them pointedly, and keep them to the minimum number that will cover all aspects. One of them has to be on cost and savings. One that is commonly overlooked is the good will of all people concerned. They are not always all benefits; some may point the other way.
- e) In a discussion section (sometimes called "Discussion of Conclusions" or "Explanation of Advantages"), give all the details supporting the statements already made. Usually it should be itemized to match the itemized conclusions. Interweave into your explanations enough of your methods to answer the reader's question "How do you know?" That applies particularly to your method of figuring cost and savings.

Though the form is commonly memo, it may be letter or some other such as that illustrated later. A title page like that of the complete analytical report may precede the form illustrated. If so, the title would be on both pages. In letter or memo form, the title would serve as the subject line. Of course the five division heads may be centered or side heads above the text, if you prefer. If you use memo form, of course Item 1 of the **Check List for Memos** will apply. In any form you can use the *a-e* directions above as the subheads under Item 2 of that check list and have a good **Check List for Justification Reports.**

The essential plan and techniques are illustrated by the following typical example:

How Mechanical Pencils Would Save Money for Morgan Company

Purpose.--To save the Morgan Company more than \$100 in pencil expense each year, I recommend that we purchase mechanical pencils instead of wooden ones for use by employees.

Cost and Saving.--A year's supply of mechanical pencils and refills would cost only \$152.40 as compared with \$266.70 for wooden pencils--a yearly saving of \$114.30.

Procedure.--A dependable automatic pencil manufacturer--Ray and Company, Rome, Georgia--would supply the yearly need of 762 pencils with the Morgan name on them at the quantity-discounted price of 10¢ each. The stockroom clerk could distribute them as he does the wooden pencils, and maintain records for control.

Conclusions.--Morgan Company would enjoy four distinct advantages by using mechanical pencils instead of the present wooden ones.

1. We would save an estimated \$114.30 a year.
2. The stockroom clerk would have fewer pencils to store and issue--762 as compared with 13,248.
3. Employees would be more careful about misplacing them.
4. Mechanical pencils stay sharp and thus provide uniform, neat writing without loss of time and patience at the pencil sharpener.

Discussion.--The following explanation of those four advantages will show how Morgan Company would gain by using mechanical pencils.

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1. During the past three years pencils have cost us about 70¢ a year per employee, as shown by the following calculations:

|                   | 1960  | 1961  | 1962  | Average |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Pencil costs      | \$271 | \$227 | \$295 | \$231   |
| Employees         | 450   | 298   | 395   | 381     |
| Cost per employee | 60¢   | 76¢   | 75¢   | 70¢     |

Converting to mechanical pencils would require, for each employee, an estimated two pencils (@ 10¢ each) and 20¢ worth of lead and eraser refills, for a total annual cost of 40¢ per employee.

Cost comparison shows a saving of \$114.30 with mechanical pencils:

|                                                 |               |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Cost of wooden pencils, 381 employees<br>@ 70¢  | \$266.70      |
| Cost of mechanical pencils, 381 employees @ 40¢ | <u>152.40</u> |
| <u>Saving</u>                                   | \$114.30      |

2. In the past three years, the clerk in the stockroom has had to allot space for about 1,104 dozen, or 13,248, pencils. Also he has had to take the time (considerable in the aggregate) to distribute each one. With only 762 pencils to store and issue, he could use the relieved space and time for other things.
3. Since mechanical pencils are more valuable and more conspicuous (especially with the Morgan name on them) than wooden ones, employees would be more careful about carrying them home and not bringing them back. Also, if employees had to sign a receipt--which is more feasible with the fewer mechanical pencils--misplacements would occur less frequently. Those misplaced might be worth at least a part of their cost as advertising.
4. The mechanical pencil needs no sharpening and writes with the same neat uniformity throughout its use, instead of becoming blunt and less neat progressively. Moreover, mechanical pencils would avoid the interruptions to thinking and work when employees take their wooden ones to the pencil sharpener (which often annoys by breaking the lead or needing to be emptied).

**Progress Reports.** As the name suggests, the progress report is an interim report of how you are getting along on a project—usually a construction job. It may be a single, special report or one in a series of required periodic reports. (In the series, the last one is called the *completion report*.) As a periodic report, a progress report is usually strictly informational. A special progress report is likely to be analytical, because of the special problem that caused it to be written.

The general purpose of a progress report is to keep the top men informed so that they can act wisely. If the report is for the owner, he may want to consider whether to continue as planned, change the plan or methods, or drop the project. If it is for a contractor, he may need to consider such questions as when to order certain materials, whether to increase the men and equipment assigned to the job, and whether to bid on another job.

Basic contents of a progress report are the answers to three questions:

1. Whether the project is on schedule;
2. If not, why not; and
3. Plans for completion.

Though the following are not necessarily the subdivision headings, a progress report may cover any or all of the purpose and nature of the project, what has been done, present status, what is now being done, plans and outlook for the future, and unexpected developments. The last may be of major importance if the report is designed to get a decision on a problem that has arisen. In series, each progress report summarizes former work reported but stresses developments since the preceding report. Progress reports on research projects may or may not include tentative findings and conclusions—depending on the writer's confidence in them and the immediate need for them.

No single plan is always best for a progress report. What is best depends upon the whole situation, especially the content, deserved relative emphasis of parts, and the attitudes and wishes of the reader.

One thing can be said: Preferably all the reports in a series should follow the same plan. It may be topical by divisions of the subject (supervision, equipment, materials, labor; or steps, phases, or divisions of the job) or it may be chronological (by days, weeks, or months; or past, present, future). One simple plan calls for (1) the transitional elements of background and summary of already reported work, (2) the body giving the details of recent progress, and (3) the prophetic or future prospects.

A more specific but somewhat flexible plan is

1. Quick introduction (purpose and nature of the project; summary of work to date; status, including any significant results).

2. Résumé of earlier progress reported, if any.
3. New progress (work done, methods and men, obstacles and what you've done about them).
4. Realistic forecast (relation to schedule, and recommendations or requests, if any).

More important than *what* plan, in most cases, is that you have *a* plan—a unifying thread to hang your beads on.

Like the plan, the form of progress reports may vary with the circumstances. Short ones usually are in memo or letter form, longer ones in some adaptation of complete report form.

Since the form, plan, and content of progress reports vary so much and we cannot well illustrate all the possibilities, we think we can help most here by illustrating some common weaknesses in progress reports: (1) having nothing to say but trying to pretend that you do, (2) using pompous jargon to cover up, and (3) being nonspecific. The following illustration properly lampoons the main weaknesses.

#### STANDARD PROGRESS REPORT FOR THOSE WITH NO PROGRESS TO REPORT

During the report period which ends (fill in appropriate date) considerable progress has been made in the preliminary work directed toward the establishment of the initial activities. (Meaning: We are getting ready to start, but we haven't done anything yet.) The background information has been surveyed and the functional structure of the component parts of the cognizant organization has been clarified. (We looked at the assignment and decided that George should do it.)

Considerable difficulty has been encountered in the selection of optimum materials and experimental methods, but this problem is being attacked vigorously and we expect that the development phase will proceed at a satisfactory rate. (George is looking through the handbook.) In order to prevent unnecessary duplication of previous efforts in the same field, it was necessary to establish a survey team which has conducted a rather extensive tour through various facilities in the immediate vicinity of manufacture. (George and Harry had a nice time in New York.)

The Steering Committee held its regular meeting and considered rather important policy matters pertaining to the over-all organizational levels of the line and staff responsibilities that devolve on the personnel associated with the specific assignments resulting from the broad functional specifications. (Untranslatable—sorry.) It is believed that the rate of progress will continue to accelerate as necessary personnel are recruited to fill vacant billets. (We'll get some work done as soon as we find someone who knows something.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission from the *ABWA Bulletin*, January, 1956.

**Credit Reports.** The credit report illustrated as a letter report (p. 151) is typical of those written by individual references about a credit applicant. But various trade associations, credit bureaus, and special credit-reporting agencies have to write so many credit reports that each develops special forms for convenience and the economy of standardization.

Because the purpose of a credit report is always the same and known to the reader; because there is no history of the problem; and because the methods and scope are always the same, the credit report omits the introduction. Because the credit report is an informational rather than analytical report, it also omits conclusions and recommendations. And because it is a short-form report, it omits other parts of a complete report—all except the text and perhaps a synopsis. But because the credit report must protect the writer against libel suit, it includes the necessary legal defenses (in addition to assumed truth in the facts presented) by specifying confidential use for the purpose of self-protection mentioned when it was requested. Because credit decisions are always made on the basis of the four C's of credit (Capital, Character, Capacity, Conditions), the report invariably covers those topics (but not under those headings). The information includes anything which might have a significant bearing on the credit worth of the subject (individual or firm) and omits anything else.

Different organizations still set their reports up in various forms. One of the oldest and biggest credit-reporting agencies follows this pattern, which covers just about everything others do in different form:

1. A subject line identifying name and address of subject, kind of business, and symbolic rating of capitalization and dependability (A-1, F-2, G-5, e.g.).
2. A summary of background, net worth, payment practice, and conditions and trends.
3. Several reports from firms which have sold to the subject of the report. These—usually in tabulated columns—establish the highest credit extended, amount currently owed, amount past due, the terms, manner of payment, and length of the credit relationship.
4. A financial statement (signed if possible, sometimes followed by notes on facts that influence financial solidity).
5. A description of operating conditions (including type and price ranges of stock, kind of customers, cash versus credit sales, advertising and other promotion, location, competition, kind and size of building, neighbors and other factors influencing fire hazard, insurance, and fire record).

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6. A history describing origin, kind of organization, shifts in organization or ownership, any changes of location, and growth of the business, with emphasis on the facts about the owners and managers (education, experience, and any significant personal details such as age, marital status, and health).

The following old report is just one of the many kinds, but it illustrates most of the points. When you notice how the note in fine print at the bottom provides legal protection against libel suit, you will understand that Dun & Bradstreet had to get permission from Simpson to release this report for educational purposes.

| <i>Dun &amp; Bradstreet Report</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      | RATING<br>CHANGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| SIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | NAME & ADDRESS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                         | STARTED                                   | RATING                                                     |                                                                      |                  |
| 52 51                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | SIMPSON HARDWARE CO.<br>SIMPSON, WILLIAM J., OWNER<br>495 N MAIN ST.<br>SPRINGFIELD OHIO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                         | CD 26 FEB 2 19-- N<br>HARDWARE & PAINTS   | 1948                                                       | E 2<br>Formerly E 2½                                                 |                  |
| TRADE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         | TRADE<br>SALES<br>WORTH<br>EMPLS          | DISC-PPT<br>\$89,446<br>\$27,908<br>1 + 1 P.T.             |                                                                      |                  |
| SUMMARY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | AN ESTABLISHED BUSINESS CONDUCTING A STEADY AND PROFITABLE VOLUME.<br>FINANCIAL CONDITION IS WELL BALANCED.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |
| TRADE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | HC<br>1551<br>900<br>400<br>1600<br>733                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ONE<br>356<br>600<br>2-10<br>2-10<br>30 | P DUE<br>2-10-30<br>2-10<br>2-10-30<br>30 | TERMS<br>Jan 19 19--<br>Disc<br>Disc<br>Disc<br>Ppt<br>Ppt | SOLD<br>1948 to date<br>yrs<br>1950 to 11-1-6-<br>Active acct<br>yrs |                  |
| FINANCE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Statement Dec 31 19--<br>Cash on hand & bank \$ 4,604<br>Accts Rec 1,315<br>Mds<br>19,158                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                         | Accts Pay<br>Accruals                     | \$ 3,064<br>621                                            |                                                                      |                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Total Current 25,077<br>Fixt & Equip 4,000-<br>Auto 2,115<br>Ppd & Def 365                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                         | Total Current                             | 3,685                                                      |                                                                      |                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Total Assets 31,593<br>Net Sales January 1, 19-- to December 31, 19--, \$89,446; gross profit<br>\$19,551; monthly rent \$175; lease expires 19--. Fire Insurance on fixtures<br>\$4,000; on merchandise \$20,000.<br>Signed Jan 30, 19-- SIMPSON HARDWARE CO. by W.J. Simpson, Owner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                         | Total                                     | 31,593                                                     |                                                                      |                  |
| OPERATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | When Simpson took over the business in 1948, sales were about \$45,000 a year. By working long hours and advertising in the Suburban News he built up volume a little every year. Also there has been an increase in residential building on his side of town. Profits have increased as sales have expanded. Cash withdrawals from the business have been conservative. Merchandise turns satisfactorily and Simpson has been able to improve his financial condition a little each year. Carries good balances at his bank and has not borrowed since 195-. |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |
| HISTORY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Details shelf hardware and tools (65%), S & W Paints (20%) and housewares, cutlery, garden implements, glass, lawn mowers, seeds and sporting equipment (15%). About 90% of sales is for cash; 30 day credit is extended to contractors and householders. Two clerks, one part-time, are employed. LOCATION: Rents a store 25 x 60 in a residential shopping area on the outskirts of town. Premises are well maintained.                                                                                                                                     |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |
| <p>Style was registered by Simpson July 17, 1948. Used for buying and advertising. Owner purchased this established business July 1, 1948 from Ralph T. Meyers. Capital was \$18,000 of which \$10,000 was a loan since repaid.</p> <p>William J. Simpson, born 190-, is married, a native of Ohio. After graduating from Miami University in 1930, taught school until 1936. 1937-1945 employed by the Wilson Wholesale Hardware Co., Columbus, Ohio, latterly in the accounting department. 1946-48 was a salesman for Davis &amp; Crocker, wholesale builders supplies, Springfield.</p> <p>2-2 (201 49)</p>                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |
| <small>PLEASE NOTE WHETHER NAME, BUSINESS AND STREET ADDRESS CORRESPOND WITH YOUR INQUIRY.<br/>The foregoing report is furnished, at your request, under your Subscription Contract, in STRICT CONFIDENCE, by DUN &amp; BRADSTREET, INC as its agent and employees, for your exclusive use as an aid in determining the advisability of granting credit or insurance, and for no other purpose. DUN &amp; BRADSTREET, INC does not guarantee the correctness of the information contained herein and shall not be liable for any loss or injury caused by the neglect or otherwise of your agents to act on the part of said company, its officers, agents or employees, in preparing, collecting or communicating said information.</small> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |
| <small>933-4 (2000)</small>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         |                                           |                                                            |                                                                      |                  |

**Annual Reports.**<sup>1</sup> In accounting to their publics for their management of funds entrusted to them, corporations and governmental units summarize each year's activities in their annual reports.

Back in the middle of the nineteenth century, when annual reporting really started, stockholders were the only public considered. Since they were usually wealthy and educated—or advised by investment specialists—early annual reports were little more than financial statements in the formal accounting terms of the day. And the usual attitude of management was to tell as few people as possible as little as possible.

Today all that is changed. Stockholders have increased greatly (now estimated at almost one tenth of the U.S. population, or something above seventeen million people, many of whom are not acquainted with accounting terminology). Labor forces have increased their power and have become intensely interested in the corporation's affairs. The changed thinking of the times considers corporations essentially public institutions affecting the whole public welfare. Management has seen that its publics include stockholders, workers, customers, government officials, and the general public. It has realized that many of these people are not educated in accounting and that many of them are interested in more than the strictly financial affairs (wages, fringe benefits to workers, products, research and development of new products, and over-all policies, for example).

Annual-report writers today, therefore, try to write so that everyone can understand, and they try to cover topics of interest to all publics. And with the realization that people are inclined to distrust and take a dim view of things they don't know about, management has shifted to the attitude of telling as many people as possible as much as possible (limited only by security regulations and information that might hurt the competitive position of the company).

Indeed, today the annual report is a major medium in the public relations programs of most corporations, a means by which they hope to tell their story to all their publics to justify their existence and their ways of doing things. They know that any business firm exists, in the long run, only with the approval and patronage of a public whose good will they have. Most corporations therefore make their reports available to anybody who asks, and some go to considerable expense to make their reports appealing and to buy newspaper advertising space or radio and television time to tell their stories to everybody. Some have gone so far in telling their stories that the reports seem more like propaganda or advertising brochures than

<sup>1</sup> Though some annual reports are not short, they are largely factual reporting (informational) rather than analytical studies of problems with conclusions and recommendations. Therefore they, something of a special type and form, belong in this chapter more appropriately than in the next.

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objective reports—and have sometimes thereby lost faith and face. But the usual annual report today is highly informative about the organization it represents.

Usually today's annual reports contain a letter from the highest official as well as financial statements and the auditor's statement of opinion (sometimes called the "certificate"). Often the letter from the president or chairman of the board is only a short introduction to a review of outstanding influences, developments, and trends affecting company operations. Frequently it is both an introduction and a synopsis. And in many cases it is the entire report, running to 10, 12, or more pages.

Either way, most annual-report writers adapt all the devices already mentioned here—readable style, liberal use of meaningful headings, graphic illustration—to make reading easy and interesting and the reports effective public relations agents for the organizations they represent.

Annual reports deserve the study of any student of accounting. While they are not the accounting reports commonly presented by the accountant to his clients or his superiors, they are excellent studies in reporting and interpreting financial information.

You can find a tremendous volume of material about them in the library. And, as we mentioned in the chapter on application letters, you can get examples by writing to almost any company. The annual report of a company is a source of information which anybody should read before applying for a job with that company.

*Short Analytical Reports.* As you have seen, some of the short reports in forms already discussed have been informational and others have been analytical. Yet the name "short analytical report" often has a special meaning in report-writing circles—a meaning indicating a certain form rather than any very definite limits of length. In that sense—the sense used in this section only—a short analytical report is like a complete analytical report which the writer has cut down by (1) omitting certain parts, (2) combining parts where possible, and (3) writing less in the remaining parts simply because their topics require no more. Even so, it is still likely to be longer (maybe up to ten pages) than what is generally called a short report (usually five pages or less).

Since the parts of a short analytical report all have parallels in the complete analytical reports discussed in the next chapter, we see no need to explain and illustrate them here. For your study of short analytical reports, therefore, we ask you to keep in mind the following points as you study the next chapter:

1. The short analytical report usually omits the cover, the letter of authorization, and the letter of acceptance.

2. It often also combines the letter of transmittal and synopsis, omits the table of contents, omits the bibliography and provides the full references as footnotes or interwoven citations, and interweaves the essential parts of possible appendix material right into the text.
3. It may, but rarely does, also put the title information at the top of the first page and move right into the next part on that page; combine the essentials of authorization, transmittal, and synopsis as a summary right after the title-page information; omit the introduction as a separate part and interweave its essentials into the text. It could thus have only three sections—the title-page information, the summary, and the text. That is about as far as it can go. Any report would have those elements, though they might be arranged differently and presented in different forms.

### Check List for Memos

#### 1. Form:

- a) Use a neatly arranged heading, including at least the company name (usually in capitals); some wording like *Memo*, *Memorandum*, or *Interoffice Communication*; and a date line.
- b) Begin *To*, *From*, and *Subject* at the left; preferably, double-space between them; and use colons right after each or align all the colons with the one after *Subject*. In either case, align the beginnings of what you fill in after the colons.
- c) Use courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Miss) with the names of others (but not yours) if you would in talking with them; and use official titles for everybody unless all readers would know them.
- d) For emphasis, underscore or capitalize subject lines.
- e) End-of-line periods are unnecessary, even undesirable.
- f) Single-space within paragraphs and double-space between.
- g) Use itemizations, headings, tables, and charts where helpful.
- h) For pages after the first, put at least the addressee's name, the date, and the page number on the first line and triple-space below it.
- i) Use no salutation, complimentary close, or typed name of writer at the end; sign only nonroutine reports requiring authentication.
- j) When used, file and other references (including other people to receive carbons) may be put under a flush-right date or to the right of the To-From-Subject block. (Carbon-copy lists more commonly appear at the end instead.)

#### 2. Organization and coverage:

- a) Bring in your main point (whether it is a request, conclusion, recommendation, or something else) in the first sentence *unless your reader might resist*; and, if he might, lead up to it with whatever facts, reasons, or explanations are necessary to convince him—especially any reader benefits you can point out.
- b) Be sure to make clear that your information is valid and pertinent by making clear what the problem is and how you got your information to solve it; but see 3b.
- c) Effective dates (for directives)—and when necessary, other time limits, places, and people concerned—are important points for coverage.
- d) Consider whether you should mention alternatives to your recommendation.
- e) Should you explain more specifically how to carry out your proposal?
- f) Be sure you have covered all points that your reader will need or want covered—especially all steps in your logic.
- g) Check your sequence for coherence, logic, and psychological effect (A, B, or C plan).

#### 3. Style:

- a) Make the subject line indicate the content accurately and specifically.

**Check List for Memos (Continued)**

- b) Emphasize the important and avoid undue emphasis on the unimportant. What you found out and the likely effect are more important than how you found out or from whom; so for 2b, usually you should just *imply* or *interweave* in incidental phrases the necessary but unknown parts of *purpose* and *method* of the report. Usually the reader will already know the purpose; and, if not, it and your method of getting information are usually implied in stating the facts you got. "Sixty-two per cent of your employees favor . . ." indicates both what the problem is and survey method.
  - c) Be sure your terminology, sentence length and structure, and paragraph length and structure make for quick, clear, easy reading. Short words, sentences, and paragraphs usually help; itemizations and tabulations may help further.
  - d) Display really significant data, conclusions, and recommendations by such means as increasing white space, decreasing line length, itemizing, and tabulating.
  - e) For coherence (and often for conciseness), precede displayed items with an appropriate introducing statement.
  - f) Don't develop a fever (with numerous strong adjectives and adverbs, for example); keep it objective.
4. Tone:
- a) Soften commands for acceptable tone; sharp imperatives rankle even in directives. "You will . . ." is too commanding for most situations. Three directives from which you can usually select an appropriate one are (in descending order of sharpness) "Please . . .," "Will you . . .," and "I request that you . . .." "If you will . . ." is usually too weak.
  - b) Phrase recommendations for acceptable tone (depending on the reader-writer relationship and the firmness of your conviction) as "You must . . .," "I recommend . . .," "I suggest . . ."; "The only way . . .," "The best solution is . . .," and "Probably the wise decision is . . ."
  - c) Accusations are always objectionable.
  - d) Positive is better than negative phrasing.
  - e) Item 2a is an important factor in tone.

# XV. Complete Analytical Reports

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## Basic Layout

Optional and Minor Parts

Title Page

Letter of Transmittal

Contents

Synopsis

Introduction

Text

Conclusions and Recommendations

Appendix

Bibliography

Illustration: Student Report

IN PETTY DETAILS the make-up of long analytical reports varies only a little less than the organizations sponsoring the reports. Hence we cannot tell you the details of any report form that will be acceptable universally or specifically to the particular organization for which you may write.

Yet in the larger aspects of report parts and their interrelations, agreement far exceeds disagreement. In this chapter we propose to explain and illustrate report make-up with emphasis on the generally acceptable major points. Since you will want some guidance on details too, however, we will suggest a good way to handle them; but we ask you to remember that what we present on details of form is *not the only way*.

Even more important, the illustrations are NOT presented as perfect reports, and certainly are NOT to be followed slavishly or copied parrot-like. At best, they show acceptable content, form, and general style for their particular situations as starters to your thinking on those points for your situation.

## Basic Layout

Most complete analytical reports include three broad categories of several parts each. Those parts marked with an asterisk in the following list are normally not used as separate parts except in long, formal reports; but the others are almost universal.

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preliminaries | { Cover<br>Title Fly*<br>Title Page<br>Letter of Authorization*<br>Letter of Acceptance*<br>Letter of Transmittal<br>Table of Contents<br>Tables of Illustrations*<br>Synopsis |
| Body          | { Introduction<br>Text<br>Conclusions<br>Recommendations                                                                                                                       |
| Supplements   | { Appendix(es)<br>Bibliography<br>Index*                                                                                                                                       |

These specifics will help in layout and pagination.

1. Generally each of the listed parts used begins a new page; otherwise, only the filling of one page calls for a new one. (Exceptions: The table of illustrations may be put on the same page with the contents if space allows without crowding. Each appendix begins on a new page.) The text, conclusions, and recommendations do not need to begin new pages.
2. Preliminary pages are counted beginning with the title fly, if used, and are numbered in lower-case Romans; other pages are numbered in Arabics. The first page number of any part beginning a new page is centered at the bottom of the page; others are placed (preferably) at least three spaces above the end of the first line. No page numbers need adornments such as parentheses, hyphens, periods, or underscores.
3. If the report is to be bound, extra space is required for the bite so that no writing will be hidden and margins will appear equal.

**Optional and Minor Parts.** Now before we present the parts that require full discussion and illustration, let's clear out the no-problem parts and the optional parts marked with asterisks in the preceding list.

The **Cover**, much like the cover of a book, is there to hold the report together and protect it. But unless it has an open or cellophane-covered cutout, it hides the identifying title page. It then needs to carry at least the title (perhaps in shortened form) and the author's name, but it may carry the rest of the title-page information too.

As the name suggests, the **Title Fly** is a full page carrying only the title. Whatever its use in printed books, it is only excess paper in

typewritten reports. If used, it is counted as the first of the preliminary pages (lower-case Romans), though the page number does not need to appear on it.

Though written by the man who has the problem to be solved and pays for the report rather than the one who prepares it, the **Letter of Authorization** should be included when the assignment was made by letter. That is most likely to be when the assignment is a big one, especially if it is a public-affairs problem or the report writer is an outsider working on a fee basis. By showing any reader what the assigned job was, the letter enables him to judge the adequacy of the report. To make sure of getting what he wants, the writer of the authorization needs to state the problem precisely and make clear the purpose, scope, and limits on time, money, and the like. He may help further and save himself money by asking specific questions and, if he knows how, suggesting sources, methods, or approaches that might be useful.

The **Letter of Acceptance** is the answer to the authorization. Together they constitute the working agreement.

**Tables of Illustrations** are needed only if some of the tables and graphics might be useful to a reader independently of the discussion around them. If used, in table-of-contents form they list separately the tables, charts, and figures in sequence by their identifying numbers and titles, and give the pages on which they appear.

An **Index** would serve little purpose in most reports both because they are not long enough to need one and because they are not used the way a reference book is. Ordinarily the table of contents adequately serves the purpose of an index, helping a reader to find a certain point without reading the whole report. If, however, you find that you must prepare an index, take some good advice from people who have tried indexing: (1) Hire a professional indexer to do the job or (2) study at least one of the several helpful books on the subject before you start. Indexes done by nonprofessionals are mostly rather poor, including those in most textbooks—too scant and too full of errors.

**Title Page.** The title page is usually the first of the preliminary pages (counted as lower-case Roman numbers down to the introduction), but the page number i does not need to appear on it. Four other blocks of information do: the title itself, the name and title of the reader, the name and title of the writer, and the place and date. In many instances the name of the organization with which both writer and reader are connected is desirable information also. When needed, a brief abstract, a list of people or departments to receive copies, and project or serial-number identifications may appear also.

Like any other heading, the title should indicate precisely (not too much and not too little), concisely (without wasted words such as "A Report on . . ." or "A Survey of . . ."), and interestingly the

content of the report. If you can't do that in about 20 words or less, you might consider writing a short title and supplementing it with a secondary clarifying title (usually in parentheses a couple of lines lower); but you should not use a subtitle to dodge reasonable efforts at making one title do the job well. The main problem is to delimit the topic adequately but concisely.

In looking at the accompanying illustration of the title page, note how the writer blocked her information into four parts, how she used balanced layout, and how specific she made her title. A report is information about a specific problem of a businessman or a definite group, and the title should indicate that specificity (often to the extent of naming the man or group as well as the problem). You can't answer such a general question as "Should Spot Radio Advertising Be Continued?"

**Letter of Transmittal.** Unless the report is an extensive and formal one, including such things as a copyright notice, title fly, letter of authorization, and letter of acceptance, page ii (counted, but not necessarily numbered) is a letter of transmittal. (In a formal, public-affairs report with large numbers of indefinite readers, a typical preface replaces the personalized letter of transmittal.)

Written after the report is completed, in regular letter form (Chapter I) and a style appropriate to the circumstances, the letter of transmittal must do at least two things: transmit the report and refer to the authorization. In informal situations, one sentence can do both: "Here's the report on fish poisoning you asked me to write when we were talking on May 10." Usually it needs to be a little more formal than that, but it needs no bromidic "As per your request, . . ." and rarely such formality as "In accordance with. . . ." Certainly it needs to subordinate the reference to the authorization to avoid a flat and insulting sound of seeming to tell the reader that he asked for the report, as if he were too dumb or forgetful to remember. In the rare cases where there is no authorization, instead of the reference to it the writer tells enough background to arouse interest in the report.

Despite the importance of conciseness and the possibility of doing in the first sentence all it *has* to do, a letter of transmittal will say more if for no reason than to avoid a curt tone. Some additional things it might talk about (but not all in any one letter) are

- A highlight particularly significant in affecting the findings, or a reference to special sections likely to be particularly interesting to the reader.
- A summary of conclusions and recommendations if the reader is likely to be sympathetic, provided that there is no synopsis two or three pages later. Even then, the letter can give the general decision but not supporting data.

WHY THE A. L. BANGE COMPANY SHOULD DISCONTINUE SPOT RADIO ADVERTISING

Prepared for  
Mr. A. L. Bangs  
President

by  
Evelyn Loven  
Assistant Buyer

Tremont, Ohio  
December 1, 195--

- Side issues or facts irrelevant to the report but interesting or valuable to the reader.
- Limitations of information, time, and money—provided that they are not established in the introduction, where they naturally belong if they are true, and provided that they do not sound like lazy excuses.
- Acknowledgments of unusual help given by others not cited later as sources.

The letter may appropriately end with some expression indicating the writer's attitude toward the significance of the report and/or his own appreciation for having been allowed to work on it.

The writer of the accompanying transmittal letter wisely elected to incorporate her summary or synopsis in the letter, thus saving time for her reader. Had the synopsis been longer, she would have handled it separately, immediately after the Contents.

Otherwise the content of that letter is quite typical. You will notice that it transmits the report and refers to the authorization in the first sentence and expresses appreciation in the last. Other possible contents of a letter of transmittal were unnecessary, especially in view of the synopsis.

But the layout of the third and fourth paragraphs of that letter, though good, are individualistic rather than typical. The whole middle of the letter, giving the supporting data, could be more normally written like this:

Though the radio theoretically reaches more prospective customers at only twice the cost per family (19.9¢/1,000 vs. 10.04¢/1,000), it actually reaches fewer than the newspaper and costs 27 times as much per prospect reached (82¢/1,000 vs. 3¢/1,000).

A part of the reason is that whereas nearly all of the 11,354 copies of the local newspaper go to the store's trading area, many of the 21,368 radios in WFRO's more extensive coverage are outside that area. Even within the area, only one out of five families listens to radio commercials, whereas at least one member of a family nearly always reads the newspaper. Moreover, people don't remember commercials as long as they do ads in newspapers, probably because the newspaper is available for reference later.

The total effect has been that Bangs sales of individual items spot-advertised as well as total sales showed little difference (1%) during the time you advertised by radio. The single item that showed any appreciable increase was maternity wear—a new department without competition in the town.

We do not mean that you should copy our rewritten version instead of the original; we mean that you should not copy anybody's word patterns, especially if they are unusual. You should look at illustrations for ideas and principles of communication—then express your thoughts in your own way.

**Contents.** The next part, usually page iii (with the number centered at the bottom, as always on a page with extra space at the top because of a part heading), is what is commonly called "Table of Contents," or simply "Contents." It sets out the headings of the report and their beginning page numbers. Thus it quickly shows the organization and serves as a handy guide for the reader, especially the busy reader who may want to check only some parts. In the absence of an index, it needs to be detailed—the more detailed the better.

To list in the table of contents the table itself and those pages

## Letterhead

December 1, 195--

Mr. A. L. Bangs, President  
 The A. L. Bangs Company  
 Tremont, Ohio

Dear Mr. Bangs:

Here is the report you requested two weeks ago concerning the advisability of continuing the spot radio advertising which you started last May.

The cost figures gathered from Station WFRD and the Tremont News Messenger, and analysis of your store sales figures, support the recommendation that you concentrate your advertising dollars on newspaper space.

Here are some of the significant reasons:

- though the radio provides more extensive coverage, the newspaper circulation more nearly corresponds to the store's trading area
- radio can reach more homes around Tremont because 21,368 families own radios but only 11,354 receive newspapers
- radio ads cost only twice as much per family theoretically reached (19.9¢/1,000 vs. 10.04¢/1,000) but--because only one out of five families listen to commercials--27 times as much per person actually reached (2¢¢ per 1,000 vs. 3¢ per 1,000)
- even so, people don't remember commercials as long as they do ads in newspapers (probably because the newspaper is available for reference later).

BUT THE MOST CONVINCING REASON IS THAT

- Bangs sales of individual items spot-advertised as well as total sales showed little difference (15%) during the time you advertised by radio. The single item that showed any appreciable increase was maternity wear--a new department, without competition in the town.

I've enjoyed making the study. Please call on me if I can help further.

Sincerely yours

Evelyn Lovan  
 Assistant Buyer

that come before it looks a little odd; the reader would already have seen them. Yet conventional practice does condone listing of preceding letters. Remember, however, that the preliminary parts down to the introduction are NOT parts of the outline and do not get outline symbols, such as *I* and *A*, but only their names and page numbers (small Romans). If a separate synopsis comes after the table of contents, you list it flush left without an outline symbol, usually as the first thing on the list.

Then comes the real outline of the report—the headings and sub-heads. In most reports it's best to give all of them. They are reproduced in exactly the same wording as elsewhere but not necessarily

in the same type. Preferably they should be preceded by the outline symbols—capital Romans for the major divisions (including the introduction, conclusions, and recommendations) and capital letters for their subdivisions, according to the system of outlining suggested earlier. (Remember that Romans line up on the right.) If any heading runs over to a second line, it should be cut under (indented). Each heading is then followed by a leader line of spaced periods leading to the page number, as in the accompanying illustration.

Supplementary parts such as appendixes and the bibliography are given Arabic page numbers like the body copy, but they do not get Roman numbers to the left in the table of contents because they are not logical parts of the discussion being outlined. The accompanying illustration does not list a bibliography simply because the report did not have one as a separate section. If your report does—as it probably should unless very short—list it, flush left.

The contents may be single- or double-spaced, or single-spaced within parts and double-spaced between, whichever makes the best appearance on the page.

*Synopsis.* Written after the report proper has been completed, the synopsis is a condensed version of the whole report (introduction, presentation of facts and the interpretations of them, and conclusions and recommendations). It is the report in a nutshell. Usually it should be somewhere between a 10:1 and 20:1 reduction. In most cases the introduction should be reduced even more, and the conclusions and recommendations less because they deserve the main emphasis.

Since the synopsis stresses results, it should not be used in a report which needs to be strongly convincing because of the reader's likely resistance; the condensed presentation of findings may not be adequate to do the necessary convincing before the reader sees the unwelcome conclusions.

But in a report which may properly follow the deductive plan because the results are probably welcome to the reader, the synopsis serves two important purposes: (1) it saves time for the busy reader who may find there all he wants; and (2) even for the reader who goes on through the whole report, the synopsis gives him a bird's-eye view which enables him to read the rest more easily and more intelligently because he can see how each fact or explanation fits into the final results which he already knows. Often it also serves as the basis for a condensed oral presentation to a group of important "readers" such as a board of directors.

The letter of transmittal you read earlier is also an example of synopsizing. In that report, the author used no separate synopsis, but wove it into the letter. For a more typical example, read the more detailed synopsis (p. 515) of a different report long enough to make

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desirable a separate synopsis (the better practice in all but comparatively short reports). It specifically and concisely synopsizes a report of six major divisions (besides the introduction and the conclusions and recommendations) running to 27 pages. Desirably, it focuses on a quick presentation of results (the decisions) in the first paragraph; while also giving just enough of the introductory material for coherence and clarity. Then it summarizes the six data-filled sections in the same order and proportionate space given the topics in the full report. For readers not used to market-research data, headings like the following might have helped: Population and Buying Units, Buying Income, Retail Sales, Drug Store Sales, Over-all Business Factors and Stability, Business Activity.

Synopsis

Savannah people are likely to buy more at a Rexwall Drug Store than Charleston residents are, according to this market evaluation prepared for the Chairman of the Board, Rexwall, Inc., by Factseekers, Inc.

Though metropolitan Charleston merchants serve 11,000 more customers from the shopping area, Savannah retailers can expect some trade from almost twice as many out-of-town buyers (340,000 versus 184,000). Savannah's 1,000 more family units more than compensate for the fact that the Charleston family averages 3.62 people while the smaller Savannah family averages 3.4.

Savannah individuals average \$85 more buying income, but the larger Charleston families average \$35 more per family for a total of half a million more annual buying income. With less first-mortgage money to do it, 2,800 more people in Savannah have built homes in the past four years; but 17,000 more Charlestonians own automobiles.

The higher buying income of the individual Savannah buyer and the larger number of customers from around Savannah explain why \$2.5 million more passed through the hands of Savannah retailers last year. Individually, Savannah residents spent \$75 more; the smaller Savannah family, however, spent only \$55 more.

Though five years ago Charleston druggists outsold those in Savannah by an average of \$3,000, last year the 61 Savannah drug-store managers and owners collected about \$5 million--\$170,000 more than 62 Charleston druggists--for an average of \$4,000 more per drug store in Savannah.

Overall business factors also point to Savannah as the choice. Savannah's estimated business volume of \$989 million is almost twice that of Charleston. Since a significant part of this difference is attributable to the 10 million more tons of cargo handled by the Savannah docks, Savannah consumers and retailers will feel the pinch of recessions and strikes more than Charlestonians. The extra \$36 million added by Charleston manufacturing, however, is almost as uncertain in the stability of that city as the effects of shipping are on the economy of Savannah. Charlestonians benefit from \$35 million more of the relatively stable wholesale business; but \$32 million more agricultural income from farms averaging \$4,000 more in value helps to bolster the Savannah economy.

Certainly Savannah's business activity has been consistently better than Charleston's in the past four years. Though the trend continues up in both cities, construction has averaged \$12 million more annually in Savannah. Bankers in Savannah have consistently received about 10% more deposits than their Charleston counterparts have--for \$150 million more in commercial accounts and \$12 million more in savings. In both cities postmasters have collected about 8% more each successive year, but Savannah citizens have steadily paid for \$200,000 more postage than Charlestonians have.

Whenever possible, confine the synopsis to one page. Even though your report is double-spaced, single-space the synopsis if such spacing will help you keep to one page—for three reasons: (1) favorable reaction of your reader, (2) good training in condensation for you, and (3) wider distribution and readership, often including newspaper reporters.

Since the synopsis is derived exclusively from the report itself—which is adequately illustrated and documented—you need neither graphics nor citations. But you do need to give the main supporting facts. Otherwise the synopsis becomes a nutshell with no meat. That is one reason we use the term *synopsis* rather than *abstract*. Abstracts are of two kinds—topical, giving only the points discussed; and in-

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formative, giving the findings about each topic, with emphasis on conclusions and any recommendations made. A synopsis is like an informative abstract, emphasizing results.

**Introduction.** The introduction to a complete analytical report serves primarily to answer the second of a report reader's two inevitable questions: How do you know? Rarely does it answer any part of the first question, What are the facts? If that question needs to be answered briefly and early, the synopsis does the job.

But since the introduction does begin the body of the report—which also includes the findings of fact and their interpretation, the conclusions, and the recommendations if the reader wants them—the title of the whole report appears at the top of the page, which is numbered Arabic 1 (centered at the bottom instead of at the upper right, as always on a page with extra space at the top because of a part heading there).

In explaining how he knows the forthcoming facts to be reliable, the report writer states his **purpose** and his **methods** and **scope**, so that the reader can judge whether the research would produce information that is sound and adequate for the purpose. Unless the reader sees that the research is basically sound, he naturally discredits the whole report because he sees that the writer doesn't really know but just thinks he does. The introduction, then, is an important part of the conviction in the report and therefore deserves careful attention from both writer and reader.

You can make a good start by selecting a heading for it that gives a preview of its contents more precisely and more interestingly than the stock term "INTRODUCTION." The accompanying illustration, you notice, does better; but you don't need to use its wording. The heading of the introduction, the first major division of your outline, should be the same grammatical and type form as all the other major-division headings. (Some writers draft the introduction after other parts have been completed.)

Besides the standard parts (purpose, method, and scope), an introduction may take up one or more (rarely all) of several other possible topics. For readers who may not know the **background** to the problem, it may include a little history. If the background can be kept short, it is usually the first part of the introduction and leads into the statement of purpose; otherwise, to avoid delaying the statement of purpose, the writer starts with that and uses the flash-back method to follow quickly with the clarifying background to the problem. He may relegate any very long background story to the appendix and refer the needy reader to it. In the accompanying illustration, the writer applied the flash-back method and put background under the somewhat unusual heading, "Present conditions."

In a study involving a choice or evaluation, the introduction may well explain the **criteria** or **standards** used.

**WHY THE A. L. BANGS COMPANY SHOULD DISCONTINUE SPOT RADIO ADVERTISING**The WHY and HOW of This Report

Purpose.--After the A. L. Bangs Company of Tremont, Ohio, started using spot radio advertising in its program, the question arose, "Is this advertising practical enough to warrant its continued use?" This study answers that question.

Present conditions.--Since May of 19-- the Bangs Company has broadcast spot ads on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 12:35 p.m. over station WFRO AM/PM. This time is in the Class A bracket (\$4.25 for each spot if broadcast 104 times a year), which includes the times of day when the listening audience is the largest.

As usual, advertising continues in the Tremont News Messenger and through stuffers sent with the monthly statements.

Scope and methods.--To determine how effective radio advertising is for the store, I first compared trading-area coverages of the radio and the newspaper, based on an area map of the radio coverage (prepared for WFRO by a radio-engineering firm) and subscription lists from the newspaper. To identify the area from which the Bangs Company draws most of its business, I tabulated the residence of each charge customer. Figures on the number of families and of radio families in each of the principal towns came from the latest Census of Population. Newspaper subscription lists established number of homes reached by newspapers.

The reader should be forewarned of any unavoidable limitations of time, money, or data that make the report less than might be expected. Unless the warning has been given in the letter of transmittal, it may be interwoven with method and scope if it is not too extensive. Only then should it have its own heading. But in no case should it be used as excuse making for the writer's own shortcomings.

Sometimes the report uses technical words or certain terms applied in a sense unfamiliar to likely readers. If so, the writer may explain them in the introduction or, preferably, in brief parenthetical statements immediately following the first use of each special term. If the list is extensive, the glossary may be an appendix.

Any special materials, apparatus, or techniques need to be ex-

plained, to assure the reader of their soundness. Whether they are explained in the introduction, or along with the presentation of the findings, or in an appendix (where a long survey questionnaire might appear) will depend on the complexity and the detail necessary for clarity and conviction that the methods were sound. In general, explain the whole thing in the introduction. Specific details of an experiment or specific questions on a questionnaire may, however, be best presented along with the findings. Only complex formulas or new research procedures are likely to call for a special appendix of explanation (usually for the uninitiated reader, who is referred to it). The important point is to answer the big question—How do you know?—before the reader asks it.

Then you are ready to present the assuredly reliable facts.

Before asking the reader to go on this mental journey, however, be sure you give him a final reminder of his route: a concise statement of **plan**. Such a statement should not be long or detailed in its itemization of *all* your headings. Usually one effective sentence can chart the way through to the end, like this:

As bases for determining the more favorable market conditions, the report examines—in this order—population characteristics, buying power, retail sales and drug store sales and the attendant competition, stability of the economy, and the current business outlook.

If you compare that statement of plan to the separate synopsis presented earlier, you will see that they both reflect the careful organization of the same report—a 27-page one.

The statement of plan is probably more useful at the end of your introductory remarks, but it may be incorporated with the explanation of purpose, method, scope, or limitations.

**Text.** Even the lazy writer who gets by with INTRODUCTION as the heading for that part cannot get by with TEXT as a heading covering the biggest part of the report, where the writer presents his findings and analyses of them. The stock term, fitting all reports and therefore useful in talking about them, fits no one report well.

But, more important, the text section of the report is fundamentally the report; so if you try to phrase a suitable title for the section, it will be the same as the title of the whole report. Then the basic elements of your report—the factors or criteria on which the final decision is based—become third-degree headings with seemingly too little significance.

That is the first of the two major problems confronting the writer in presenting the text of his report: (1) showing the reader the organization carefully worked out as the third step in report preparation and (2) phrasing well the findings of the second step (collection of data) and the interpretations made in the fourth step. Satisfactory

To find out how many people were actually reached by the newspaper and the radio station, I used statistics compiled for each of them by such recognized agencies as the Audit Bureau of Circulation and the A. C. Nielsen Company. Much of the information on the listening habits of Trenton people came from a survey conducted three months ago by Robert S. Conlan and Associates, Inc.

Daily sales tickets of the Bangs store showed the number of sales of each item, which I cross compared against WFRO records showing the type of merchandise spot-advertised and when.

Total Bangs sales figures for last year (from the accounting department) were adjusted to find out what sales should have been this year in the light of national sales trends as reported by the National Industrial Conference Board Publications. These adjusted sales figures are compared with actual sales to determine the overall effect of the radio advertising introduced this year.

Limitations.--Comparing number of words in a spot ad to the number of words in lines of newspaper advertising is admittedly open to question; nevertheless, it is one means of evaluating. Furthermore, the number of people listening to the radio at any one time and their concentration or inattention are impossible to verify. And the great number of factors affecting sales--weather, factory strikes, for example--make it impossible to attribute fluctuations to any one cause with absolute certainty that you are right. On the other hand, if radio spot advertising has any effect on the sales of the Bangs Company, we can reasonably assume that it would show up in some of the items specifically advertised or in the total sales over the test period.

solutions to both are necessary if you are to give your reader the reliable information he wants.

Your main methods for showing the over-all organization, the relations between parts, and the relation of each part to the whole are headings and subheads, topic sentences, and summary and anticipating statements. The headings and subheadings grow directly out of your attack on the problem, where you broke it down into its elements and further subdivided it by raising questions about each. Now that you are presenting the facts that provide the answers, you need only phrase those elements and questions into headings and subheads that are indicative, interesting, concise, and (in some cases

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Basic plan.--To help answer the fundamental question, this report examines both radio and newspaper coverage, cost, and retention value before analyzing sales records.

Greater Coverage by Radio but More Selectivity through Newspaper

Both cover trading area; some waste in radio.--As you can readily see from the three maps on the following pages (good things in the report, omitted here for reasons of economy), the A. L. Bangs Company's trading area is completely covered by both the daily newspaper, the Tremont News Messenger, and radio station WFRO AM/FM. This area includes all of Landu County and also the neighboring parts of three adjoining counties.

The newspaper's coverage by carrier and mail delivery closely resembles the Company's trading area. Mail delivery, however, is one day later than the date of publication.

On the other hand, the radio covers the entire trading area as well as a much larger secondary area from which the Company draws no trade.

Both the radio and the newspaper cover the trading area, but much of the radio advertising is wasted because it goes to people who do not trade in Tremont.

Radio covers more families.--A much better idea of the coverage comes from comparing the number of families in the trading area reached by radio and those reached by newspaper. According to the latest Census of Population figures and newspaper circulation records, the number of radio families in the principal cities and towns in the retail trading area (21,368) just about doubles

preferably) informative to the extent of telling the most important findings about the respective parts.

Just as a well-phrased heading may tell the main point about the section over which it stands, a topic sentence can give the essence of a paragraph and clearly foreshadow what the paragraph says. The topic sentence puts the big point across fast, arouses the reader's interest in seeing the supporting details that follow, and makes reading easier because of the preview. Though the resulting deductive paragraph plan is not the only one possible, it is the most useful for most kinds of writing, including report writing.

Reversing the plan produces a paragraph which presents a series

the number of newspaper subscriptions, as shown in the following table [omitted]. Radio families are almost 100% of the total families of the area (22,204) and newspaper subscriptions about half that. Therefore most families in these principal cities and towns could be exposed to radio advertising.

Although the radio ads cover some unnecessary area, they still make it possible to reach a greater proportion of the people the Company wants to reach than is possible through newspaper advertising.

#### Higher Cost of Radio Advertising

Radio costs 4:1 for same content.--To compare the costs of newspaper advertising to those of radio advertising, I experimented with different ads and found that on an average people read two column inches of advertising in 20 seconds, the length of the average Bangs spot ad. On the assumption that a 20-second spot and a two-column-inch ad are comparable in content, I determined the relative costs of \$4.25 (WPRO rate chart) and \$1.14 (57¢/column inch).

Those figures alone do not tell the complete story, however; for according to Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Patricia L. Kendall (Radio Listening in America, Prentice Hall, New York, 1948, p. 373), successful spot radio advertising depends on frequency of broadcast.

On the basis of content alone, radio spot advertising is clearly much more expensive than newspaper advertising. The repetition necessary for success only makes it more so.

Radio costs 2:1 for each family theoretically reached.--It is possible--and frequently true--however, that a higher priced ad may reach so many families that its cost per family may be lower than a less expensive one.

of facts and arguments leading to a summarizing sentence at the end.

Both plans may be applied to larger sections as well as to paragraphs. In fact, both a paragraph's topic sentence and the first part of a larger section may reflect, summarize, or provide a transition from a preceding part, as well as give the essence and preview of what is to follow. And endings of both paragraphs and larger parts commonly summarize them, show the significance of the just-completed part to the whole problem at hand, and foreshadow what is to follow in the next section (as the ending of the illustrated introduction does). Though the summaries may indicate the advisability of a certain ac-

To find the cost for each family theoretically reached by radio, I divided the number of homes with radios (21,368) into the cost of one spot ad (\$4.25) to arrive at a cost of 19.9¢/1,000 families. The same procedure applied to a newspaper ad shows a cost of 10.0¢/1,000 subscribers (\$1.14 ÷ 11,354). Since a very large part of these subscriptions go to families (only a very few to business firms), we can safely say that to reach a family by radio costs almost twice as much as by newspaper advertising.

Radio costs 27:1 for each person actually reached.--But not all radios are turned on and even if turned on some will not be tuned to WPRO.

Advertisers figure that one-third of the radio families will not be at home and another one-third will not have their radios turned on. Of the 21,368 radios in the Tremont area, then, only 7,123 are likely to be tuned to WPRO under the most optimistic circumstances.

Tremont families listen to other stations more frequently than they listen to WPRO, however. On an average 43% of the sets, 3,063, will be tuned to the local station.<sup>1</sup> And when a Tremont radio is on, 1.7 people are listening. Accordingly, we can reasonably assume that 5,207 people are actually exposed to the commercial and thus arrive at the cost of 81.6¢/1,000 people actually reached (\$4.25 ÷ 5,207).

The News Messenger, with a circulation of 11,354 in the Bangs trading area, has a secondary readership of 3.5 persons per copy (both figures from Readership of the Tremont News Messenger, Audit Bureau of Circulation, 1954). Since the estimated number of persons exposed to a newspaper ad is 39,739

<sup>1</sup>Study of Listening Habits--Tremont, Ohio, Robert S. Conlan and Associates, Inc., 1954, p. 5.

tion, they should not go further and steal the thunder of the recommendation section by actually saying that the action should be taken.

Little more need be said about how to put the findings of fact and the interpretation into words. You have already learned to use commonly understood words, short and direct sentences and paragraphs, itemizations, summarizing and transitional phrases and sentences, headings and subheads, and nonverbal assists to words. You know, too, that you need to support your statements of questionable fact with explanations, additional specific and concrete details as evidence, citations of sources, and statistics.

(11,354 x 3.5) and the cost of the ad is \$1.14, we can for all practical purposes assume a cost of 2.87¢/1,000. Radio, then is almost 27 times as expensive in terms of people actually reached. *[A summary table appeared here.]<sup>7</sup>*

#### Greater Retention Value of Newspaper Ads

The most significant point to establish in considering relative retention value of advertising media, I believe, is that advertising in a small town like Tremont to a large extent is merely keeping the store name and the merchandise before the public. People here do not respond to advertising as quickly as they do in large cities; they wait until they had planned to go downtown to shop before they come to the store.

Mr. J. W. Clark (President, Kirby, Clark, Inc., New York), at a recent conference of buyers which I attended, pointed out the postponed-buying habits of people in towns of less than 40,000 population and added that for this reason spot radio advertising is impractical for stores located in towns the size of Tremont. He went on to point out that a newspaper usually remains around the home for some time and shoppers can refer back to an ad to get details they might have forgot, whereas a radio ad once heard can never be heard or referred to again.

Too, it is an accepted fact that almost everyone remembers things he sees longer than those he hears. And in view of the continually confirmed fact that only about one out of five people listen to commercials attentively, a fact Charles Rull Wolfe re-summarized in Modern Radio Advertising (Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1953, p. 504), the greater retention value of newspaper

But remember that graphic presentations are not complete unto themselves, that they only help words to present facts. They cannot interpret. The reader will consider your job only half done if you present him with a mass of undigested data and make him do the interpreting. But if you put graphics and comments about them close together so that the reader can see both at once, each supplements the other.

References to the carefully chosen, most suitable graphics should be subordinated to the interpretation of the facts shown. The mere fact that the graph is there, or even the facts shown in the table or graph, are less important than the significance of those facts to the

advertising is clearly implied--and its application to the small-town customers of the A. L. Bangs Company obvious.

We do not need to operate solely on assumption, however; company sales confirm the tentative conclusions.

Negligible Effect of Radio Ads on Sales

No significant change in sales of selected items.--Sales of seven selected items for the week before and also for the week after they were advertised on WFRO were quite irregular, as Chart 1 shows. At this point appeared a graph with seven different-colored lines representing sales of maternity dresses, pajamas, brassieres, hose, sweaters, girdles, and coats for two successive weeks. The usual peak of sales on Saturday and a low on Monday is the normal pattern for the store, in no way attributable to radio advertising.

Any upward trend of sales during the second week could reasonably be attributed to the radio advertising, but sales of only one item rose significantly--maternity dresses. Since this department was added to the store the week the advertising and sales were observed, the assumption that radio spot ads had anything to do with the sales is hardly justified--especially in view of the fact that this is the only maternity department in the city. The next three pages of the report present and interpret six more small two-color line graphs--the first was for maternity dresses--showing sales for a week before and a week after spot advertising of the six other items.

Records of sales before and after spot radio advertising of selected items do not show that spot advertising brings significant increases in sales or

whole problem or the particular point being made at the time. So the emphasis should be on the interpretation. Note how the references to charts are made throughout the text of the accompanying report.

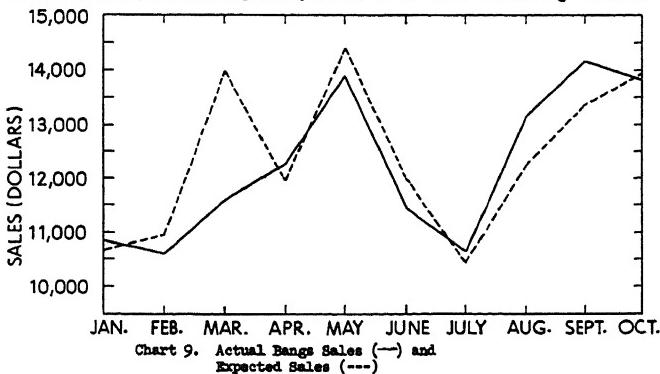
Though basically the interpretation points out trends, high and low points, and significant differences brought out by comparisons and analyses of facts and figures presented, you need not waste words by talking about "a comparison" or "analysis of" or "a study of"; if you state the significances, you imply the comparison, the analysis, or the study. And the comparisons become more significant if you put them in terms of percentages or ratios instead of, or in addition to, giving the raw figures.

those items.

No appreciable increase in total sales.--Since the number of people coming into a store may be substantially increased by advertising, total sales of the store can also be affected by the radio promotion.

But to compare last year's monthly sales to this year's would not take into consideration the fluctuations due to changes in general business activity. I therefore used National Industrial Conference Board percentages of increase and decrease of this year's sales to last year's sales (Table 2) to see what we should expect this year without radio advertising. [The statistical table of the original report is omitted here.]

The difference shown in Chart 9 between what the sales actually were and what could be expected could possibly be due to the radio advertising. But the



To avoid monotony of both sentence pattern and length, especially in a series of similar comparisons, consider different types of sentence beginnings. Nearly always you can do better than use the expletives "It is . . ." and "There are . . .," which waste words, delay the idea, and lead you to weak and awkward passive constructions.

And unless the logic of the situation clearly dictates otherwise, you'll do best to use the present tense for both presenting and interpreting the facts.

With the facts and analyses well organized, clearly presented, and sharply summarized at the ends of sections, you have led the reader to your statement of conclusions and (if he wants them) recommendations.

variations between actual sales and expected sales in the months of January through April, when radio advertising was not used in either year, suggest that the variations from May to October cannot be definitely attributed to spot advertising alone.

Even if we assume that the difference between what sales were and what could have been expected was a result of the radio advertising, the extra profits which may be attributable to it do not pay for it.

From May through October--the period observed during which the store used spot ads--sales were \$750 more (1%) than could have been expected (Table 2). At the average net-profit margin of nearly 10%, this means radio ads increased the store's profits by about \$12.50 a month. Such an amount is not only negligible when compared to the total monthly profits--it does not even pay for one week's advertising ( $3 \times \$4.25$ ). Clearly spot advertising has not paid its own way at the A. L. Bangs Company.

#### Summary of Reasons for Discontinuing Spot Advertising

I recommend that the Bangs Company discontinue spot radio advertising and concentrate on newspaper advertising because

- spot radio ads have had apparently little effect on the sales of the store, either on selected items spot advertised or on total sales
- on any basis it costs more than newspaper advertising, not only because of actual cost but also because of waste coverage
- Tremont customers, like all small-town customers, are not likely to respond to spots, preferring to depend on their newspaper for remainder when they decide to shop. . .leisurely.

***Conclusions and Recommendations.*** When you put your conclusions and recommendations into words, they should not be surprising—and they won't be if you have done an adequate job of the preceding part. There you should have presented all the evidence and analysis necessary to support your conclusions. So no new facts or analyses should appear in the conclusions or recommendations.

Whether you separate conclusions and recommendations into two headings makes little difference. Some people prefer separation because, they say, the conclusions are strictly objective, logical results of what has been said, whereas the recommendations are the individual writer's personal suggestions of what to do about the problem.

Whichever point of view and plan you use, the important thing is to be as objective as possible in stating both conclusions and recommendations.

As evidence of that objectivity in your conclusions and as a means of saving the reader the trouble of looking back into the text, you may well lift basic figures or statements from the earlier presentation and interweave them into the conclusion sentences. The writer of the synopsis illustrated on p. 515 knew that the reader of his report could not possibly retain the 200 or more facts and figures given as evidence in 27 pages of analysis. In recalling to his reader the significant evidence affecting the decision, therefore, that writer wisely attached a specific figure to every fact. Note, too, the specific wording of this ending section—as well as the selectivity and brevity.

#### VII. THE PREFERRED CITY: SAVANNAH

Although a Charleston druggist enjoys the advantages of

- a population with a half million dollars more buying income annually and families with \$35 more to spend
- 11,000 additional potential customers

a Savannah drug store would likely sell more because of these advantages:

- \$170,000 additional drug-store sales and \$4,000 greater sales per drug store
- \$2.5 million more retail sales and \$1.62 more per person spent in retail stores
- 1,000 more families and per-capita income \$87 higher
- four-year trend increases of 8 to 10% in construction (\$12 million more), bank deposits (\$150 million more), and postal receipts (\$200,000 more)
- \$969 million business volume (twice as much as in Charleston).

Both conclusions and recommendations need to be as pointed and positive as the facts and the writer's judgment will allow. (Usually itemization will help you to make them so and help the reader to see them as such.) If you toss the problem back to the reader with indefinite conclusions or alternative suggestions, he may feel that the salary or fee he has paid you for doing the report has been wasted. Still he retains the right of final decision; so, even when he asks for your recommendations, he expects you to present them as definite suggestions but certainly not as commands. The example just cited—which is phrased specifically in terms of the objective of the report, to select the city which will likely be the more profitable scene of operations—avoids indecision on the one hand and its equally undesirable opposite, imperative command.

**Appendix.** Though the report reproduced here in telescoped form needed no appendix, many reports do. The key test is this: Use an appendix for material which the reader does not *need* to see to understand the text but which some readers may *want* to see to be sure your textual statements are valid. Frequent uses are for survey questionnaires too extensive for presentation in the introduction and not essential to the reader's understanding; for extensive formulas and statistical calculations; for extensive history, too long for the introduction; and for large maps, diagrams, or tables of figures that may be the basic data of the whole report but do not belong at any particular place in the text. Often the best arrangement is to put a big table in the appendix and use appropriate figures from it as spot tables at key places in the text.

**Bibliography.** Most reports have a bibliography. The writer of the spot radio advertising study did not compile one because her report was short and included few published references; these few were adequately identified as she referred to them and could easily be assembled mentally by any reader in two or three minutes. In view of the circumstances under which she submitted her report, she was probably justified in omitting a formal bibliography—but that is the exception rather than the rule for any but short reports.

Most of the time when you use printed sources, the reader expects you to tell him what they are, not only to avoid the accusation of plagiarism but also to indicate reliability and perhaps provide him with places to get fuller information. Your footnotes and other citations in the text give the specific references. But at the end you list—in alphabetical order of authors' surnames, or titles if the source is unsigned—books and magazines which you have used for basic background information or for specific facts, ideas, or direct quotations.

The following bibliography (telescoped here for space economy) went with a 20-page report. (Usually the best spacing is single within items and double between them.) The items are arranged alphabetically by author (or by title if the publication had no by-line) and numbered for concise, specific citations in the text.

#### Publications Consulted

1. "Airlines Will Sacrifice Power to Obtain Lower Jet Noise Level," Aviation Week, 66:348, February 25, 1957.
2. "Boeing Sets Suppressor Flight Test," Aviation Week, 66:41, April 1, 1957.
3. "Portable Jet Engine Muffler Design," Aviation Week, 66:74-75, April 8, 1957.

4. Richards, E. G., Technical Aspects of Sound, Elsevier Publishing Company, New York, 1957.
5. Richards, E. J., "Research on Aerodynamic Noise from Jets and Related Problems," Royal Aeronautical Society Journal, 57:318-342, May, 1953.
6. "Silencing Jet Fleet Will Be Costly," Aviation Week, 66:47-48, May 27, 1957.

### Illustration: Student Report

The following student report should be read straight through for the feel of report continuity. Selected partly for its shortness (to save pages and reading time), it nevertheless illustrates adequate handling of the standard parts of a complete analytical report. (We feel that the preceding discussion and a little ingenuity will enable you to prepare other possible parts if you need to write them—cover, title fly, letters of authorization and acceptance, table of illustrations, appendix, and index.)

Because the report illustrated here is somewhat short, however, it does not need to make full use of topic and summary statements needed at the beginnings and endings of sections in longer reports. For illustration of how to use them, we refer you to Style 4-7 in the following check list.

Though the following is primarily a **Check List for Complete Analytical Reports**, many of the items apply to all reports. For greatest usefulness the points appear in the order of preparation of your material, not the order of presentation when the report is assembled in its final form. Remember, however, that this is only a check list. If you need fuller explanation of a point, find it in the appropriate chapter. (The index may help.)

### Organization/Outlining (O)

1. Your title should make clear the nature and purpose of your analysis. Thus it will show the basis of classification as you phrase the major divisions of your subject, and prevent overlapping. (See Item 1, p. 460.) It may or may not reveal the outcome or reflect basic method. Answering as many of the who, what, why, where, when, and how as necessary, it should establish the boundaries of your treatment in such a manner as to imply a promise to your reader.
2. In comparisons, carefully distinguish between subjects of your study and criteria (tests) which you apply to the two or more subjects from which you ultimately make a choice.
3. Carefully distinguish, also, between a criterion (one of the tests you apply) and a method. A research procedure or a statistical procedure—which does need identification and probably expla-

WHY THE OFFICE OF INFORMATIONAL SERVICES  
SHOULD PURCHASE A PITNEY-BOWES MODEL 5500 POSTAGE METER

Prepared for

Mr. W. H. Kerns

Director

by

Paula Levin

Student Assistant

Gainesville, Florida

May 21, 1962

nation in the introductory passages—is the way you have gone about evaluating, not the basis of evaluation.

4. An outline in which the contents suggested by the title and by some other heading (usually II) are essentially the same thing shows no recognition of effective organization. All the basic elements of the problem are parts of the text. They are where you present all your facts and analyses.

*According to strict logic*, those elements would be the only appropriate major divisions (numbered in Romans in the suggested outline form). Neither the introduction nor the conclu-

May 21, 1962

Mr. W. H. Kerns, Director  
Office of Informational Services  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

Dear Mr. Kerns:

Here is the report you requested on our proposed purchase of a Pitney-Bowes postage meter.

A revision of our mailing system would wisely include the purchase of a Pitney-Bowes Model 5500, and a rearrangement of the office furniture could help our office workers save steps and speed the mailing of daily and weekly news items.

In the two months since you requested me to make this study, I've learned some interesting facts which I believe will be of help to you in making the final decision. Please call on me if I can be of further help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Paula Levin  
Student Assistant

sions and recommendations (like the synopsis and bibliography) would get major-division status. They are not logical factors, or elements, or criteria, of the topic named in the title.

*Customary practice*, however, DOES give major-division status (Roman numerals in the outline) to the introduction and to the conclusions and recommendations (separately or together). They deserve the emphasis, though they are not logical parts in the same breakdown of the title that gives you the text elements.

5. *Customary practice* ALSO skips a heading for the whole text and gives each major element of it a separate Roman number—

Contents

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for proper emphasis and better balance. So don't bury the elements or criteria in third- or fourth-order heads.

6. A heading must be phrased to cover any and all of the items listed under it. "Greater Number of Men in Milwaukee" does not cover subhead "Greater Density of Population in Buffalo"; but "More Favorable Population Characteristics in Milwaukee" could cover that as well as other points like age, color, and vocations.
7. Consider the function (how you are interpreting or applying) of your piece of information in maintaining a logical sequence without shifting viewpoint as you move from second- to third-

Synopsis

The purchase of a Pitney-Bowes Model 5500 postage meter by the Office of Informational Services would result in time savings and increased office efficiency.

The present mailing procedures of the Office of Informational Services often waste valuable time of both office workers and professional news writers. The volume of mail, 2,000 or more pieces per month, justifies the purchase of a meter.

The purchase of a Model 5500 and a rearrangement of the office furniture and equipment would help greatly to speed the mailing process each day. Initial cost outlay would be \$195, and monthly rental charges would be \$7.20. All servicing, maintenance, and replacements would be made free of charge by the Pitney-Bowes Corporation.

The use of meters is widespread; small offices find them valuable time savers just as do larger offices. One-third of the users of the Model 5500 spend less than \$5 per day on postage; the Office of Informational Services spends an average of \$4 to \$5 per day on postage.

The purchase of a meter and a rearrangement of the furniture to improve work flow would require few procedural changes; the two office workers could be trained to run the meter in less than 30 minutes. Cost would be relatively low, and the resultant rise in employee morale and office efficiency would make these changes well worthwhile.

to fourth-order heads. The relation of the part to the whole should always be clear and defensible.

8. Headings of the same class should be in the same grammatical form. Noun phrases are probably best. Complete sentences are perfectly acceptable, though often bulky.
9. When you have only one division under a heading, you have either omitted something or merely restated the governing head. True division gives at least two parts.
10. Make the heading tell something of the findings as well as establish boundaries. One-word headings only name the topic and are usually too general and all-inclusive (promising more than you

WHY THE OFFICE OF INFORMATIONAL SERVICES  
SHOULD PURCHASE A PITNEY-BOWES MODEL 5500 POSTAGE METER

The Basis of This Report

Purpose

Since the University of Florida Office of Informational Services often has difficulty in meeting mail deadlines because of University Mail Service regulations, the purchase of a postage meter is being considered. This report analyzes the considerations involved in such a purchase. The basic questions are

- 1) whether present operations can be improved by use of a postage meter;
- 2) if so, what the most appropriate meter is, and
- 3) whether the expected overall improvements would justify the purchase.

Scope and Methods

In order to determine whether or not the purchase of a postage meter would result in greater economy and efficiency in daily mailing, I first studied the present procedures of the Office of Informational Services by on-the-spot observation and questioning of employees. The figures on volume of mail came from office records for the preceding ten months.

cover). You cannot exclude properly with a heading like "Grocery Stores." Give your reader a tentative idea of findings with a heading like "The Increasing Importance of Grocery Stores in the Distribution of Cosmetics." Under a second-degree heading of "CURRENT BUSINESS FACTORS FAVOR MILWAUKEE," present third-order headings such as "Milwaukee's Larger Postal Receipts," "Larger Volume of Bank Clearings in Buffalo but Greater Percentage Increase in Milwaukee," and "Milwaukee's Greater Volume of Construction."

11. Subheadings are like road markers: they keep pointing the way, providing reassurance and relief. Too many become a distraction, maybe even an irritation; too few make the harder.

Sales literature and cost information on postage meters of various types was obtained from the Pitney-Bowes Corporation of Stamford, Connecticut.

To determine the practical feasibility of adapting automation to mailing procedures in a small office, I then surveyed eleven small business firms in Central Florida. These eleven firms were questioned as to their present outgoing mail practices and their use of postage meters. All offices surveyed are comparable in size to the Office of Informational Services.

Library research on office management methods provided further answers to the question of the practicality of postage meters.

Limitations

The exact cost savings that will result when a machine may lie idle a major portion of the day are hard to determine (8:9, meaning page 9 of item 8 in the bibliography). Yet the use of the machine may still be justified if valuable time will be saved for the employees.

Although actual time savings could have been determined by extensive motion and time studies if I had had the time, the know-how, and the facilities to conduct them, I felt that the methods I used provided a reasonable basis for judgment (14:118).

12. In phrasing headings, work for variety. Use synonyms to prevent monotony of expression. In the body of the report, with analytical passages in between, the same words used over and over again in exactly the same pattern begin to pall; but in the contents, where they are closer together, the effect is deadening.
13. Remember that the wording of any one heading must be the same, regardless of how many times it appears—or when, or where.
14. Use placement on the page, spacing, and differentiation of type of headings (with or without conventional outline numbers) to show the relative importance and relation of parts. (See pp. 474-75.)

Basic Plan

To explain carefully the reasons why the Office of Informational Services should purchase a Model 5500 postage meter, this report examines the Office of Informational Services' present mailing procedures, the types and uses of various Pitney-Bowes meters, and the probable results of the purchase of a Model 5500. The choice of the Model 5500 as opposed to other models is explained in the section which discusses the various types of Pitney-Bowes postage meters available on the market.

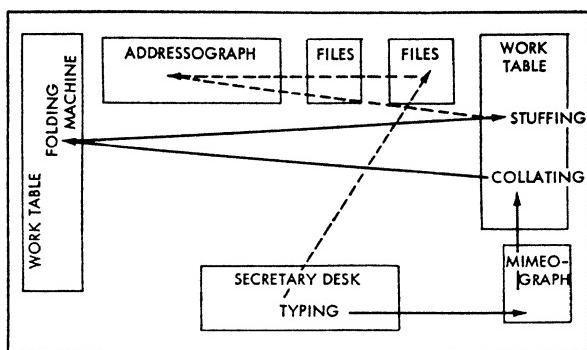
Office of Informational Services - Present Mailing ProceduresHandling of Outgoing Mail

The preparation of news items for daily and weekly mailings follows the basic steps shown on the flow chart at the top of the following page. Items are typed and mimeographed by the secretary, and then must be collated (by hand) and folded for mailing. After envelopes are prepared on the Addressograph, they are stuffed by hand with the help of one clerical assistant. Very large mailings (which occur on an average of three to five times per week) often require outside help to meet Mail Service deadlines. Professional news writers often use their valuable time to assist the two girls in getting out the mail on time.

## Graphics (Gr)

1. For the convenience of your reader, place the graph, table, or any other illustrative device as close to the point discussed as you can get it.
  - a) Most charts and tables you can present in small enough size to splice right into your text with additional white space on both sides, above, and below. Part of a page of graph paper will serve well for most charts.
  - b) For a table or chart taking up the better part of a page, place it on the facing page to the left of the point illustrated.

Chart 1. Flow Chart of Outgoing Mail Preparation



KEY: ————— PREPARATION OF NEW ITEMS  
----- PREPARATION OF ENVELOPES

After items are stuffed, the envelopes (unsealed) are taken to the University Mail Service, which then does the sealing and posting. Deadlines at 4:00 p.m. each day often prevent important news items from being mailed until the following morning.

If only a few pieces of mail were involved, or if larger batches came up only occasionally, an inefficient procedure would not be particularly disturbing. But when the volume becomes large, inefficiency becomes burdensome and costly.

#### Volume of Mail

Volume of Pieces Mailed.--Invoices for envelopes show that the Office of Informational Services sends out over 24,000 pieces of mail per year. This means that 2,000 items

- c) The laziest and least useful way is to dump all illustrations in the appendix. If the reader really needs to see them, put them in the text.
2. For economical references to them in the text, number all graphics or tables and give them complete and accurate titles, keys if necessary, and any necessary explanations.
3. Preferably place numbers and titles of tables above, and of other graphics below.
4. Adequately label all parts of a table (the rows and columns) and of a chart if you elect to omit a key.

per month (or over 90 pieces per working day) follow the procedures shown on the flow chart.

Costs of Average Monthly Volume.--The average postal charge for stamps is \$83.09 per month, as shown in Table 1 below. This figure divided by 4¢, the cost of mailing each item, substantiates the average and daily mail volumes as being at least 2,000 pieces per month if we allow an extra \$3.09 per month for the few packages and Special Delivery letters mailed by the Office of Informational Services.

Table 1. Monthly Mail Volume as Shown by Postage Invoices

| <u>1961 Month</u> | <u>Postal Charge</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| June              | \$ 85.59             |
| July              | 101.48               |
| August            | 68.65                |
| September         | 63.91                |
| October           | 105.93               |
| November          | 20.50                |
| December          | 100.40               |

| <u>1962 Month</u> | <u>Postal Charge</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| January           | 85.90                |
| February          | 73.10                |
| March             | <u>126.44</u>        |
| <u>Total</u>      | <u>\$830.90</u>      |
| Average/month     | <u>\$ 83.09</u>      |

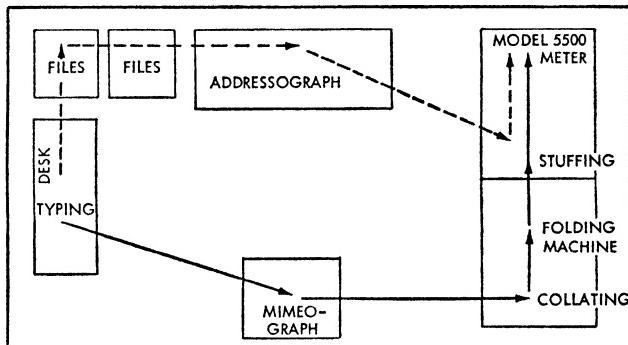
5. Indicate the source of your information when you use someone else's material (even when you derive your own figures from the material of another). To show the origin of your material, write *Source:* and follow up with the same information you would use in a footnote. When you assemble your own data and are thus completely and entirely responsible for it (for instance, company sales or employment figures), identify the circumstances in the "Method" section of your introduction and omit source indications under the illustration(s).
6. Give the dates that apply to your material. And be sure you have them right. Many current publications list information several

Areas Where Improvement Is Needed

A method of handling outgoing mail is needed which will allow daily mailings at all hours, rather than the restriction of mailings to a 4:00 p.m. deadline each day. The three major requisites of a mail room service are promptness, speed, and accuracy (4:10). Proper management of the mail service considers the factors of organization, equipment procedures, layout, personnel, and cost (6:63). The nature of news, of course, suggests that it cannot be restricted to a time deadline.

Improvement in the work flow would add to increased efficiency and time savings for the secretary and the clerical assistant. A rearrangement of the office furniture as indicated in Chart 2 would save time and steps for the office workers.

Chart 2. Proposed Flow Chart of Outgoing Mail Preparation



years old which may or may not be applicable. And the reader should at least be warned. You can always list the true date in parentheses immediately after the title of the table or figure.

7. Put a few lines of discussion of the specific point illustrated before placing the chart or table on the page—and preferably a few lines after—when you write up the report.
8. Call attention to the figure (preferably by number—that's why you number them) before it appears on the page. When it is necessarily on a different page from the reference to it, tell the reader where it is.

Arrangement of equipment and steps in an operation, however, is only one means of improving efficiency. Proper equipment can, in many cases, help even more.

Pitney-Bowes Postage Meters: Brief History and Possible Uses

Use of Meters Is Widespread

In the United States, 47% of all mail is now metered (13:84). Meters, which are available on a rental basis only, were in service in 284,000 businesses in 1959 (1:249). Sale of auxiliary machines which feed, seal, and stack mail is common to businesses which have a volume of over 1,500 pieces of mail per month (24:72).

Pitney-Bowes makes, sells, rents, and services postage metering machines; this is the only official U. S. Government function that a government monopoly entrusts to a private monopoly. Over \$1 billion worth of stamps are printed each year (23:92). All classes of mail may be metered (2:8).

Many Types of Meters Are Available

Postage meter equipment generally consists of two parts: an office mailing machine and a detachable postage meter, the latter licensed for use by the Post Office Department. Since meters print U. S. postage and account for government revenue under official lock and seal, they cannot be sold outright, as are the mailing machines,

9. Charts have more interest value than tables and with accurate labels can be just as accurate.
10. When you have a number of items to present, consider the advisability of giving them in several small charts or spot tables closely associated with the related text rather than in a collective (and frequently exhausting and dissociated) table.
11. In line graphs for time series, run dates along the bottom line; run quantities or percentages along the side. And be sure your starting point for quantities or percentages is 0 (unless your point is the *relative* values of two or more charted items instead of their *absolute* values, like Chart 9, p. 525).

but are leased from an authorized manufacturer who is held responsible to the Post Office for their proper operation and replacement when necessary.

To buy postage, you simply send the meter to the nearest post office and have it "set." Postage is paid for in advance, just as when buying stamps. But instead of buying and storing loose stamps in various denominations and quantities, you buy a convenient lump-sum setting on the meter. Any stamp value needed, from 1/2¢ to \$1.09 1/2, may then be printed.

Although many types of machines are available, along with auxiliary machines, only three will be considered here as most effective for use in the Office of Informational Services with the above-mentioned mail volume. These are the Pitney-Bowes Model DM (Desk Model), the Pitney-Bowes Model 5500, and the Tele-Norm Corporation's Postalia.

The Model DM is the smallest postage meter available. It is a hand-operated desk model, the size of a modern telephone. It has a hand-operated moistener for sealing envelopes, and rents for a standard minimum of \$7.20 per month (21:152).

The Model 5500 is also a low-cost desk model. It seals, stamps, and stacks in one operation (24:72). It

12. Remember that bars (either simple or segmented) are read as easily as pies and often more accurately—and that pictographs may add interest but can distort information.
13. When chronology is not significant, arrange multiple bits of graphed information in an ascending or descending order of importance.
14. Number charts consecutively throughout your study; number tables consecutively in their own order. Thus you may have Chart 16 and Table 2 on page 21 of your report.
15. Use the appropriate graphic wherever one will help.
16. Avoid wasting time and space on useless graphics.

has a continuous-action handle for fast operation. Total weight is 28 pounds. The sealing and stacking unit sells for \$195, and the meter is detachable for refill trips to the Post Office. Up to \$9,999.99 worth of postage may be purchased at one time.

In addition to the cost of the sealing and stacking unit, the meter itself rents for the standard minimum of \$7.20 per month. Postage in denominations of 1/2¢ up to \$1.09 1/2 in a single stamp prints directly on letters or on tape for parcels. Standard accessories are a light-weight meter carrying case, an envelope stacker that holds up to 40 letters, and a parcel postage tape dispenser. The machine also has an internally fed adjustable inker and a visible water-level indicator for the sealer.

The Model 5500 would probably be most effective for use in the Office of Informational Services, as it is designed for use with small to medium mail volume. It can be considered a high-speed machine, however, and could be used effectively under extraordinary conditions.

The advantages of the sealing and stacking unit would be a worthwhile investment in time and energy savings for the two girls in the office.

## Introduction (I)

1. Focus attention on the continuing existence of the report by talking about it in the present tense. When a reader reads it, your report analyzes, presents, takes up, examines, establishes, and finally concludes (all present tense). Of course, you'll have to use some past and future tenses, but in general use them for matters of historical record or things not yet done.
2. Put initial emphasis, then, on the nature and purpose of the study rather than on historical (past-tense) details of authorization, method, or history.

The Postalia is a small, lightweight (5 pounds) meter manufactured by the Tele-Norm Corporation. For large mailings, it fits into an electric drive unit. For use on parcel post, the meter is simply rolled against the package, as no tapes are used. It can be set for up to \$9,990 and prints a single stamp up to \$9.99. The Postalia leases for \$8.50 per month (13:84).

Small Offices Benefit from Meter Use

A survey of eleven business firms, each having from one to five employees in its mailing department, indicates that at least five of the firms have found postage meters effective for use in a small office. Of the six firms not using postage meters, three indicate interest in learning more about centralized mailing systems and postage meters.

The following table gives more complete results of the survey.

Table 2. Survey of Eleven Small Business Firms

|                                         |    |
|-----------------------------------------|----|
| Firms Now Using Postage Meters. . . . . | 5  |
| Firms Not Using Postage Meters. . . . . | 6  |
| Total . . . . .                         | 11 |

|                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| Firms Indicating Interest in Meters . . . . . | 7  |
| Firms Not Indicating Interest . . . . .       | 4  |
| Total . . . . .                               | 11 |

|                                                                           |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Average Monthly Mail Volume of Firms<br>Now Using Postage Meters. . . . . | 3,000 pieces |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

|                                                                           |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Average Monthly Mail Volume of Firms<br>Not Using Postage Meters. . . . . | 1,200 pieces |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

|                                                                                           |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Average Monthly Mail Volume of Firms<br>Not Using Postage Meters but Interested . . . . . | 2,300 pieces |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

|                                                                                               |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Average Monthly Mail Volume of Firms Not<br>Using Postage Meters and Not Interested . . . . . | 600 pieces |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

3. Not every report analysis needs a history section. Even if yours does, it may be more wisely handled with a subordinate reference quickly recalling the circumstances to your reader in conjunction with "Purpose" or "Method." It may be a short identification after "Purpose." It can be handled effectively and economically in the transmittal letter. And if it is extensive, consider shifting it to a preliminary section after the introduction (so that your outline would be I. Introduction II. History III. First Significant Criterion) or relegating it to the appendix, with a short statement in your introduction telling your reader where it is.

Firms using postage meters, or those who do not use them but are interested in purchasing them, have average monthly mail volumes of from 2,000 to 3,000 pieces. These figures are also representative of the Office of Informational Services' mail volume.

Of the five firms using postage meters, only one has to detail extra help in the mailing department during peak seasons. Of those firms not using meters, all six state that they detail extra mailing room help during peak seasons.

Probable Effects if the Office of Informational Services Purchased a Pitney-Bowes Model 5500 Postage Meter

Required Changes in Mailing Procedures Would Be Few

Purchase of a Model 5500 would require only a small space in which to put the meter. The secretary and the clerk could be trained to operate the meter in less than 30 minutes. Required changes in operating procedures would therefore be practically negligible.

Costs Would Be Low

Purchase of a Model 5500 would require an initial outlay of \$195 and a monthly rental fee of \$7.20. All servicing and maintenance would be done by the Pitney-Bowes Corporation. Replacements for obsolescence are also made by the Pitney-Bowes Corporation at no charge to the customer.

4. Definitions of terms aren't always necessary either. Even if they are, they are probably more useful as parenthetical or footnote explanations when you first employ the terms in the discussion.
5. Ordinarily you do need some explanation of procedure or method. Show in the required detail how you've gone about solving the problem with answers to the applicable when, where, how, how many, who, and why of what you did. In answering the reader's question, "How do you know?" you establish in large part the impartial, unbiased, unprejudiced nature of the report.

Efficiency Would Be Increased

The two girls responsible for the daily and weekly mailings would be able to perform their jobs with more speed and accuracy. Mail could be taken to the University Station Post Office (one-half block away) at any hour of the day, rather than to the University Mail Service three blocks away. Since metered mail is already cancelled automatically by the machine, mail would be expedited in the Post Office also. Metered mail does not require facing, cancelling, and post marking in the Post Office.

Employee Morale Would Rise

Savings in time and energy on the part of the secretary and the clerical assistant would give them both greater job satisfaction. The professional writers would no longer be needed to help with the mail during rush hours.

Conclusions

The purchase of a postage meter would undoubtedly result in time savings for the employees of the Office of Informational Services. News items could be sent more quickly to their destinations at all hours of the day, rather than at specified times only.

6. Such petty details as "Graphs have been included" are better omitted, however. Statistical exhibits are as expected in most reports as sentences are in building paragraphs.
7. Remember that references to limited amounts of time or money in the introduction may sound like excuses for poor performance. Also remember that such references—if true—may be better incorporated in the transmittal letter.
8. You usually do have limitations of coverage, however, which are sometimes desirable or even necessary to show your reader why you are not covering some phase of the subject. At least, he

The initial cost outlay of approximately \$200 would be the only real expense. A monthly rental fee of \$7.20 is low when weighted against the increased efficiency and employee morale which would result.

Both the results of the survey and the information obtained by research and sales literature from Pitney-Bowes indicate the feasibility of postage meter use in a small office.

Although the mailing equipment may lie idle a major portion of the day, its use is still justified. In a few minutes the machine can do what it takes hours for the clerk to do.

One-third of the users of the Model DM spend less than \$1 a day on postage; one-third of the users of the Model 5500 spend less than \$5 a day on postage (9:2). Since the Office of Informational Services spends between \$4 and \$5 per working day on postage, the purchase of either of these models could be well justified.

Recommendations

To speed up daily and weekly mailings, and to improve office workers' morale and efficiency, I recommend the purchase of a Model 5500 Pitney-Bowes postage meter.

As a secondary recommendation, but one almost equally important, I suggest a rearrangement of the

should know that you aren't! Frequently the most coherent way to establish the scope of your analysis is in a clear explanation of the limitations of coverage, as well as the clear identification of your plan of presentation.

9. Have a clear indication of the order in which the various points confront the reader as he goes through the report. This is usually called the "Plan." Preferably end your introduction with this statement.
10. Work for combinations of these various possible contents of the introduction to prevent overorganizing and overwriting. Nature

office furniture as shown in Chart 2, page 6.

The purchase of a Model 5500, coupled with the rearrangement of office furniture, should do much to help speed the news items on their way, to help increase office efficiency, and to help raise employee morale in the Office of Informational Services.

and Purpose go together naturally (and may include necessary identification of who wants the report as well as who submits it); Method, Scope, and Limitations can be combined; Scope, Limitations, and Plan might well be the label for one compact section.

11. In reports that contain a synopsis (which precedes the report itself), findings, conclusions, and recommendations are unnecessary in the introduction—even undesirable. When you have no synoptic material preceding, you may choose to place a short paragraph revealing major findings either at the beginning or the ending of your introduction.

Publications Consulted

1. Cahn, William, The Story of Pitney-Bowes, Harper Publishing Company, New York, 1961.
2. Gilchrest, C. J., "Miracle Machines Move the Mail," Personnel Administration, 23:7-13, January, 1960.
3. Ginder, C. E., "Current Office Equipment Policies," Office Executive, 34:16-18, April, 1959.
4. Ginder, C. E., "Mailroom Practices; N.O.M.A. Survey," Office Executive, 36:10-13, May, 1961.
5. Hanna, E. C., "Operation of Centralized Clerical Services," Office Executive, 36:32, September, 1961.
6. Haynes, Benjamin R., and John W. Neuner, Office Management, Principles and Practices, Southwestern Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1953.
7. "How Much Mechanization Can You Use Profitably?" Dun's Review and Modern Industry, 72:52-3, Sept., 1958.
8. "How to Increase the Prestige of Your Mail," Pitney-Bowes Corporation, 1958.
9. Jones, G. D., "Too Much Success a Poser Until Mechanized Mailroom Takes Over; Pitney-Bowes Equipment in Use at Simplified Tax Records, Incorporated, New York," Credit and Financial Management, 59:28-9, November, 1959.
10. Kirk, C., "How to Stretch Your Postage Dollar," Dun's Review and Modern Industry, 73:57-8, April, 1959.
11. Leffingwell, William H., and Edwin M. Robinson, Textbook of Office Management, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New York, 1950.
12. Littlefield, Cleatice L., and R. L. Peterson, Modern Office Management, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1956.

12. Repeat the exact title of the report at the top of page 1 where you begin your introduction. But in the text paraphrase it.

**Style (S)**

1. Remember that tables and charts cannot analyze. Your words do that. Put the highlights (and low points or trends) into words and establish their significance in the light of your objective as defined in your title or the specific head. It's the message of the figure that counts, not the figure itself.
2. Refer incidentally (subordinately) to tables/charts within the sentence or at the end, not at the beginning. Don't make the

13. "Mailroom Equipment; with List of Manufacturers," Administrative Management, 21:84, January, 1960.
14. "Mailroom; Open-and-Shut Case for Automation," Dun's Review and Modern Industry, 74:118, September, 1959.
15. "Mailroom Procedures Surveyed," Office, 54:24, July, 1961.
16. "Mechanized Mail Clears 4,000 Pieces by the Hour for This Public Utility," Credit and Financial Management, 62:20-1, January, 1960.
17. "Men, Machines, and Methods in the Modern Office," American Management Association, Office Management Division, New York, 1958.
18. Miller, Ben, "Gaining Acceptance for Major Methods Changes," American Management Association Research Study 44, American Management Association, New York, 1960.
19. Murphy, G., "Good Systems Design for the Small Office Equals Lower Operating Costs," Office Management and American Business, 22:33-6, January, 1961.
20. "Pitney-Bowes Installs Letter Sorting Machine," Office Management and American Business, 21:48-50, November, 1960.
21. "Portable Postage Meter Is Small, Lightweight," Purchasing, 49:152, November 7, 1960.
22. "Postage Meter Works in Harness or by Hand," Business Week, October 1, 1960, p. 63.
23. "Stamp of Success," Time, 73:92, February 16, 1959.
24. "Three-Job Postage Meter Licks, Stamps, Stacks," Business Week, January 30, 1960, p. 72.

figure the subject of the sentence. "Increased steel production, as shown in Chart 2, aids business in general and appliance-makers in particular" puts the emphasis where you want it. Parenthetical reference (Chart 2) does the same thing.

3. Headings are only assists; the text must read coherently without them.
4. A clear topic identification in your text as you begin a new point is vital.
5. As you move to a detailed analysis of a point involving two or more divisions, tell your reader what those divisions are and

name them in the order he will meet them. This is what report writers call a "topic statement."

6. When you've finished a detailed analysis involving two or more parts, establish the significance of the over-all point in a summary statement (a short sentence or paragraph).
7. Show the relation of parts to one another and to the whole in forward-looking (and sometimes backward-looking) transitional statements. They are most useful immediately after a summary statement concluding the subject of discussion under a second-order heading. But they may coherently appear in connection with topic statements at the beginning.

As an example of 4, 5, 6, and 7, here is how one writer helped keep his reader on the track with good topic statements, summary paragraphs, and transitional ideas. For economy of space, the quoted illustration is an extraction.

## II. NASHVILLE'S LARGER MARKET AREA

Since women often will travel long distances to buy clothes, the secondary area surrounding the metropolitan area is important in determining the location of a Four Cousins retail store. [Identification of principal communities and number of people in them for both Nashville and Knoxville followed.] Even though 370,000 more possible customers live within the market area of Nashville, most of the sales will come from the people within the immediate metropolitan area.

## III. BETTER POPULATION FACTORS IN NASHVILLE

The total population and its rate of growth, number of women, number of employed women, and percentage of nonwhites show more clearly the potential buyers of women's clothing. [This topic statement preceded A, B, C, D headings giving the facts about and the interpretation of the topics as announced.] Even though Knoxville has a larger population, a smaller percentage of nonwhites, and about the same growth rates, Nashville has more women and a significantly larger number of employed women. Thus it furnishes the kind of customer Four Cousins sells to. [Indicates what A, B, C, and D add up to.]

Potential customers are buyers, however, only when they have sufficient buying power. [Clearly foreshadows a topic coming up and why.]

#### IV. MORE BUYING POWER IN NASHVILLE

Effective buying income (total and per capita), income groups, home ownership, and automobile ownership give estimates of ability to buy. [The information as promised then follows in four sections.]

[This summary statement comes at the end of the section.] The Nashville shopper has more dollars to spend, even though home- and auto-ownership figures imply more favorable financial positions of Knoxville families. Higher expenditures for homes and cars in Knoxville explain, in part, why Nashville merchants sell more.

#### V. GREATER RETAIL SALES AND LESS COMPETITION IN NASHVILLE

[The writer continued the use of these coherence devices throughout the report.]

8. Your topic statements should emphasize what you are taking up and the order in which you take them up; they may explain why, but only incidentally; they may even establish findings or results, but that is more the function of the textual material and summary statements.
9. To enliven your style and increase readability
  - a) Choose simple, short words
  - b) Make people (not things, intangibilities, or percentages) the subjects and/or objects of your sentences
  - c) Use action verbs
  - d) Use active voice (and thus eliminate "It is" and "There are" beginnings)
  - e) Refer to quantities in simplified form (rounded off, fraction form, simplified percentages, reduced forms within the quick comprehension of any reader).

Here's a flat example which is shorter only because it forces the reader to dig in Figures 1 and 2 for the information:

The greatest majority of the students interviewed showed their preference for home buying in place of buying in the larger cities of Birmingham or Tuscaloosa. The over-all percentage for the entire body of male students represented

This rewrite is more informative, emphatic, and readable:

When University of Alabama men are ready for a new suit, they go home 78 per cent of the time. Though 4 out of 100 will buy in Tuscaloosa and 7 in Birmingham, as shown in Figure 1, these 11 atypical cases do not warrant extensive advertising.

by the sample was 78 per cent. The freshmen showed an even greater tendency for home buying by their percentage of 84.

Figure 1, below, gives a picture of the place of purchase of the entire group without regard to the nature of the group. Figure 2 divides the group according to the students' rank.

The Alabama man, though never weaned in the majority of cases from hometown buying, does slowly shift his clothes-buying sources from home to Birmingham to Tuscaloosa. The gain of only 13 out of every 100 purchasers over a four-year span, however (Figure 2), only confirms the suspicion that Bold Look advertising dollars in Tuscaloosa would be wasted.

10. Immediate and specific evidence (call it *support*, *detail*, or *substantiating facts* if you want to) is the essence of good analysis. A line doesn't sell "well"; it accounts for 19 per cent of total sales. "Many" people can be interpreted differently by each reader; "324" or "9 out of 10" can be interpreted in only one way.
11. In the analysis, point out the advisability (desirability, or profitability) of an action. But leave your recommendation(s) for the ending pages.
12. Write in present tense when you are interpreting a recognizable tendency which is likely to be continuing. (That's one of the reasons for suggesting that you incorporate dates in your charts and tables.) You have to assume that your most recent information is still applicable; hence, even though last year's sales figures are a historical record of what people *bought*, you are justified in saying, "People *buy . . .*," meaning that they did buy, they are buying, and they will buy.
13. Treat each subject or alternative you are examining under each point (test or criterion) you take up. The surest indication of a prejudiced writer is giving information about one subject and failing to give the same kind of information for another.
14. Emotional writing, persuasive passages, and ignoring of fact are the marks of an amateur or biased writer.
15. Assumptions are necessary in any kind of analysis, but they should be plausible, and they should be clearly established as assumptions rather than facts.
16. Let your unbiased, unprejudiced presentation be apparent from the careful, specific identification of your method, from the quality of your analysis, and from the objectivity of your interpretations and style. Talk about "unbiased," "impersonal," "objective" qualities brings questions to your reader's mind. If your report is all those good things, your reader will recognize

it as such; if your report isn't, such disclaimers only make the situation worse.

17. Remember that many factors must be evaluated relatively as well as absolutely. The relative status (per cent, ratio, or rank—a qualitative factor) is often as important as the total (or quantitative)—and may be more important.
18. A personal style (using first- and second-person pronouns—*I, me, my, our, we, us; you, your*) is clearer, easier for both writer and reader, and more natural and interesting; yet some readers (and teachers) require an impersonal style avoiding those pronouns because they think (unjustly) that personal style loses objectivity. If you must write impersonal style (which allows third-person references), you can still have highly readable copy; but you'll need to guard against an overuse of passive voice, expletive sentence beginnings (*it* and *there*), circumlocutions and other wordiness—and especially "the writer."

## Documentation (Doc)

When you use someone else's material, you are obligated to give credit to that source. The usual means of doing so are citations in the text, footnotes, source indications under graphs and tables, and a bibliography.

1. A bibliography is an alphabetical listing (either by surname of author or first significant word in the title) of all publications you have used in substantiating what you have said in the report. For the specific form, see pages 468 ff.
2. With a complete entry in the bibliography for each publication you use, you can economize on footnotes and parenthetical citations in the text with some simplified form which enables you to cite just enough for your reader to identify the publication in the bibliography. In footnotes and internal citations you always cite the specific page or pages on which the borrowed material appears in the original.
3. Save your reader's time and confusion when you can: If you can quickly identify your reference in the text, do so. If you'll number your bibliographical entries (after arranging them alphabetically), you can use parenthetical citations like (7:215) right in the text; but you'll need to explain, the first time, that you mean page 215 in Item 7 of your bibliography. If you cite the author in the text, give no more than the publication and page reference in a footnote. The two together should be a complete reference, but duplications are useless.
4. If the reference is long and involved, relegate it to a footnote below.
5. When you cite a fact or figure which is in a table or chart, you do not need an additional footnote reference because you have

the source indicated under the figure. As long as you continue to cite from the same source, you need no further documentation. If you shift sources, however, you do need a new citation, either in a *Source:* indication, in a footnote, or in a parenthetical reference in the text.

6. *Source* indications under graphs and/or tables are just the same as footnotes: author (if there is one), name of publication, specific page or pages.
7. If you run footnotes at the bottom of the page, number them. Put a number at the end of the sentence where your borrowed material appears; put the corresponding number at the bottom of the page and give the minimum required information. Separate footnotes from text by a line, and calculate your space so that the last line of footnote material falls at your normal margin point of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches up from the bottom of the page.
8. If you use numbered footnotes, number them anew on each page; such a procedure is easier for you and easier for your reader than consecutive numbering throughout the entire study.
9. Information quoted from interviews, speeches, letters, and questionnaires need not be listed in a bibliography. But credit should be given at the time of quoting or paraphrasing in the text. For an interview, speech, or letter, establish the person, his title if any, the date, place, and circumstances under which the statement was made. Questionnaire information, because it is usually collective and anonymous, needs identification in the "Method" section; thereafter it need not be referred to as a source.
10. Quotations of more than two lines should be set out with additional white space all the way around (top, bottom, both sides). Further to distinguish them, they should be single-spaced. In this position, they need no quotation marks.
11. Since the synopsis and the terminal (conclusions and recommendations) are derived from the report (which is assumed to be adequately documented), these derivations commonly contain no documentation.

### Terminal (T)

The terminal or ending section you may call by a variety of names. It may contain only significant conclusions if you have been told only to assemble facts. It may contain both conclusions and recommendation(s) if you have been asked to name the wiser or wisest course of action. You may set up two second-degree headings, one for Conclusions and another for Recommendations; or you may elect to use only one heading for the combination. You will certainly be observing good writing principles if you phrase this final section in

specific wording, indicating that it is in fulfillment of the over-all objective of the report (as the two illustrations in the preceding pages of this chapter do).

1. By definition, the terminal section is a derived section—a quick recap for your reader of the most important points you have covered. Any introduction of new material not covered in the preceding analysis is therefore an indication of haphazard planning.
2. The emphasis here should be on selectivity rather than comprehensiveness of coverage. The reasons affecting your recommendation(s), arranged in an order of importance, determine the order of presentation.
3. The more specific you can make this section, the better. Attach specific supporting figures or facts to your statements, so that your reader will not be forced back to preceding pages to find out or verify the basis for your generalization.
4. As a person of judgment (and some experience), you'll almost always have to admit that you have not built a case which is completely beyond question; you'll often do well to admit that an alternative you have not chosen does have some points in its favor. Beware of overstating your case with too strong a word like *prove*.
5. You might as well be wrong as inconclusive. Someone has paid you good money to find an answer. If you vaguely toss the problem back to the reader with alternative courses of action of equal desirability, or pass the buck in any way, you're simply not doing the job assigned you. Remember, however, that the summary, "This report does not prove a thing," is a very definite answer in the face of extensive analysis—and sometimes may be the very best conclusion.
6. The terminal must be a result of the analysis as presented in the expository passages of the report. Step by step you have analyzed and arrived at tentative conclusions in summary statements along the way. If you have analyzed and built the structure of your report well, you have kept your reader nodding his head in agreement and thus prepared him for the inevitable end result. The surprise ending is slipshod—and may be infuriating.
7. As a report writer you are rarely in the driver's seat. Someone else will make the decision. You may be expected to suggest or advise but not to command. Phrasing like the two illustrative samples presented earlier in this chapter will help you to avoid appearing peremptory or dictatorial.
8. Try itemizing your conclusions and recommendations for precision and conciseness; but avoid overlisting. Combine points so closely related that they should be seen together.

## Synopsis (Sy)

The synopsis (or epitome or précis) should NOT be attempted until the entire report has been written. It is a highly condensed summary of your entire report, written for the benefit of those readers who do not have the time or interest to read the detailed analysis and/or those who believe they can read a detailed analysis more easily if they have a summary first. It is not a preface or foreword (the functions of which are absorbed for reports in the prefatory letters). And it most certainly is not merely a rewrite of the contents table in sentence form. That would be a shell with no kernel. A good synopsis contains the most important parts of the report's kernel.

1. The synopsis which is preferable for today's busy readers contains a significant answer-to-the-problem in the first sentence. If your report ended with a recommendation, work that recommendation in as the lead; if your report merely summarized, let your lead contain the condensed significant findings.
2. Include enough of the background for coherence; but detailed explanations of method, scope, history, and plan are unnecessary here.
3. Having effectively telescoped your terminal and then your introductory functions, follow the same order of points that you have in the report itself.
4. Preferably, maintain the same proportional amount of space given to points.
5. Work in as many specific, significant statistics and other facts as you can!
6. Rely on your good order of points and short transitional words and phrases for smoothness and coherence in your synopsis. You do not have enough space here to employ the topic statements, summary statements, and transitional sentences desirable in the longer report.
7. The synopsis should stand alone (so that copies of it could be run off and circulated to many readers for coherent reading without the complete report). It should therefore neither look forward to the report itself nor backward to the preceding prefatory parts to establish a point.
8. Use of present tense is probably more desirable in the synopsis than elsewhere.
9. The synopsis concerns itself primarily with findings, not analysis (though there is more likely to be analysis in the synopsis than in the terminal section).
10. The primary difference between the synopsis and the terminal is that the terminal is highly selective; the synopsis covers the entire report.

**Transmittal Letter (TL)**

1. The letter of transmittal is an A-plan, good-news letter that should immediately and unmistakably establish the fact that the report is in the reader's hands.
2. Catch up a reference to the paraphrased topic and the time of the job assignment.
3. But tie these in naturally and conversationally. If you let the contractual aspect predominate ("Submitted herewith in accordance with your written request of April 5 . . ."), you inject an element of restraint right when you want your reader to feel most cordial toward your report.
4. If the report contains a synopsis a few pages later, you certainly do not want to dwell on findings. The only justification for including them here is to establish the value of the study (in an incidental reference much like the sales letter writer's reference to an enclosure).
5. The introduction discusses methods and sources; rarely will you want to mention them here.
6. The emphasis of your letter should be given to showing your realization of the report's significance.
7. By implication or outright statement, express appreciation (usually your most natural way to end the letter). If you represent an agency in the business of making studies, you certainly appreciate business and always put in a bid for more. If you are a subordinate within the company structure, trying to get ahead, you certainly should appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate your ability and be eager for subsequent chances to learn more about the company and to demonstrate your good judgment and business vision.
8. The weak-kneed "I hope it will be useful" is unnecessarily disparaging. If you are that dubious about the value of your report, you'd probably better rework it.

**Authorization Letter (Au)**

As the author of the report, you will of course never write your own letter of authorization. When you do have to write one, however, keep the following points in mind.

1. Since this is akin to an order letter (it just orders services instead of tangible goods), it is an A-plan letter, beginning directly with a request for information.
  - a) Make it as specific as possible.
  - b) Establish the report idea early—in the opening sentence or possibly in a subject line.

2. To preclude rambling, incomplete reports that will not serve your purposes, indicate
  - a) The nature of the problem,
  - b) The direction of the solution, and
  - c) How the results are to be used.
3. Suggestions for starting points and sources of material are helpful, and they frequently save the authorizer money.
4. Be explicit in identifying
  - a) When you want the completed study and
  - b) How much money you are prepared to spend.
5. Eliminate brusque and unfriendly overtones by exhibiting cordiality and gratitude.

### Mechanics (M)

1. For the body of the report, margins on the sides should be at least 1 inch (10 spaces on pica type, 12 on elite), and usually no more than 1½ inches. The bottom margin is generally 1½ inches (9 spaces), top margin slightly less. If you will place your page number on the 6th or 7th line and then double-space, your top margin will be in good relationship to the others.
2. As long as you can insert a heading and two or three lines of your exposition, you need not start a new page (from the introduction through recommendations) when you go from one section to another; if you don't have that much space, start a new page. Don't, under any circumstances, isolate a caption from the beginning of the material which it headlines.
3. Spiral-bound reports are more easily prepared and handled by both reader and writer. If you use a binder on the left, allow additional margins on the left (an additional ½ inch) so that when the "bite" of the binder is taken off, your pages will still have approximately equal right and left margins.
4. Preliminary pages before the contents page need not (and probably should not) be numbered; they are figured, however, in arriving at what the number of your synopsis page or pages should be. Since the synopsis appears after the contents listing, it is assigned a number. Figure it by counting every single page after the cover (lower-case Roman numerals). Place its number 6 spaces up from the bottom of the page, centered, since this is a display page. For succeeding page numbers, place as suggested under 5.
5. The page number for page 1 (as well as all page numbers where you have a displayed heading) appears also 6 spaces up from the bottom of the page, centered. All other Arabic page numerals generally go at the top right, marking the right-hand margin. No mark of punctuation (dashes, periods, parentheses) is desirable with page numbers.

6. For typed work, remember that
  - Headings in capital letters are superior to those in capitals and lower case letters, and those in capitals and lower case superior to initial-cap heads.
  - Centered headings are superior to side headings, and side headings superior to cut-in headings.
7. Any heading not in solid capitals should be underscored to make it stand out.
8. You need at least a triple space above centered heads, a double space below.
9. Centered captions of more than one line look better double-spaced. Center the second line, too.
10. For any heading, spread the lines out; have fewer and longer lines.
11. Be consistent in whatever system you adopt for headings.
12. On the title page, display in three or four blocks
  - a) The complete report title (about 2 inches or 12 spaces from the top).
  - b) The person or persons receiving the report, plus title if appropriate, and name and address of the company if different from the writer's (this slightly above the center of the page).
  - c) The writer, his job title, name of company, address, and date of the report (spaced so that the last line is at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches or 9 spaces from the bottom of the page).
13. Center every line on the title page unless you have special ability to design some other good-looking layout.
14. The simple label *Contents* is adequate for the page(s) identifying your heads and page numbers.
15. By placement and type in the contents, show that the synopsis is a prefatory part. Without outline symbol, begin it at the left margin and give it its appropriate lower-case Roman page number.
16. Likewise, show by placement and type that the bibliography, appendix, and index (if you have one) are appended parts by running them (without outline symbols) at the left margin. But they are numbered in Arabic page numerals, since they follow the pages so numbered.
17. Use spaced-dot leader lines (. . . NOT. . . ) to guide your reader's eye across the page to page-number indications. Remember to line the dots up vertically.
18. Only the page where the section begins is listed on the contents table, not inclusive page numbers.

19. Every item listed on the contents page must have a page number indicated and must be readily seen on that page.
20. Align all numbers to the right. If you'll put periods after outline symbols (I. A. 1.) and keep the periods lined up, you'll have no trouble.
21. For letters, observe the same conventions of placement and form as for any letter. They do not have to follow the same layout as the report (indeed, they should not).
22. Even though your report is double-spaced, if you want or need to single-space letters, parts of the contents table, or the synopsis, go ahead. You should, however, double-space between orders of headings on the contents page.

### **CASES FOR PART FIVE, REPORTS**

#### **Short Informational Reports Suitable for Memos or Letters**

1. Assume that you have graduated and acquired a job, appropriate to your training, in a big office where
  - 1) the company has a library-lounge and buys books, magazines, and other reading material related to its work, and
  - 2) the company invites memo suggestions of any kind from all employees.

Write a memo to the person in charge of buying for the library suggesting a subscription to a magazine in your field. Basing your comments on at least five recent issues, consider such points as the following about the magazine (and show how they make it appropriate reading for the company's employees):

- purpose, goal, intended readers
- types of writers, contributors
- types of articles
- special sections, departments
- gist of a recent article or two
- illustrations
- advertising.

2. The purposes of this assignment are to 1) show some ways in which reports are being used, 2) call attention to the significant elements in a report, 3) make clear what a report is, and 4) give you practice in classifying information and writing in deductive sequence.

Read a city newspaper for at least five successive issues and write a memo report to your instructor on the references to reports (up to 25). You will need to define *report* sharply before you start looking

in the paper. Do not include news stories about happenings or newspaper reports but only reports used as the basis of news stories. But you need to realize that many news stories based on reports the news-men have in hand do not even use the word *report* when obviously giving information that came from a report. Read between the lines.

In collecting the information, look for writer (position is worth more than the name), intended readers, subject, purpose, methods of research used, important findings, conclusions, recommendations, form, and length (though you are not likely to find all the information about any report referred to). For all but the two reports treated most fully in the newspaper, just jot down something like "Special committee of one from each military force recommends to Chief of Supply McNamara that all military officers' shirt collars be 1½" to save about \$75,000 annually." For the two treated most fully, give all the suggested information you can in regular review form, including the gist of the report and emphasizing conclusions and recommendations.

Before writing up your memo report, organize your material and jot down your comments. What do you make of your findings?

In writing up your report, use memo form, address it to your instructor, make the first section an itemized list of your conclusions or comments based on the data, and classify the remainder in the best ways you can.

3. Assume that you have written this first draft of a covering memo about the results of a survey study you have made. You see that the memo is not good. Rewrite it.

TO: Fellow Business Teachers  
FROM: (Your name with the title, "Executive Secretary,  
United Business Education Association")  
SUBJECT: Some Recent Developments in Business Education

Several months ago you were one of the 150 business teachers that was selected to participate in an experiment. This experiment was to use an "open ended" survey form to secure current information relative to recent developments in business education. We wanted to determine what changes, if any, had occurred in certain business courses during the past two decades.

It was recognized that this survey form could not be tabulated statistically, and that it would be time consuming to answer. However, it was believed that it would be more indicative of potential trends and actual change than a long check sheet. The fact that you were joined by over 60 per cent of your colleagues in completing this questionnaire speaks well for the high degree of professional interest in business education.

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The attached summary is a brief condensation of hundreds of pages of written material. We have tried to select the highlights and to emphasize trends. As would be imagined in certain areas, there are no really significant trends. In others there seems to be conflicting statements, or counter trends. We believe that this material will be of interest to you as it expresses the reactions of numerous junior high, high school, and college teachers throughout the United States. If you have any questions regarding the attached, I would be happy to have you contact me. Again, I want to say a very sincere thanks for your co-operation.

4. For a purpose and situation which your instructor assigns or which you assume and make clear,
  - 1) introduce (i.e., lead into) the information in the following table,
  - 2) present the information, with a good heading, in the best graphic form you can devise for the purpose, and
  - 3) interpret the facts fully.

U.S. Family Income (before taxes):

| Income           | 1950<br>Average: \$3,319 | 1960<br>Average: \$5,417 |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$0-\$3,000      | 42%                      | 23%                      |
| \$3,001-\$5,000  | 28                       | 21                       |
| \$5,001-\$7,000  | 20                       | 25                       |
| \$7,001-\$10,000 | 6                        | 18                       |
| \$10,001-up      | 4                        | 13                       |

5. The buildings superintendent of your school has prepared the copy for a training and procedures manual for all employees doing janitorial work under his direction. (The maintenance men, doing repair and replacement work, will get a different manual.) Realizing that he is not a good writer, he employs you to organize and edit the copy for his approval before it goes to the final typist. He gives you the copy with the following headings, all in the same form, on successive sections. (From reading the copy, you've jotted down parenthetical indications of the content under the various headings.)

You see immediately that the sequence of topics will have to be settled first because it will affect the copy editing—especially in the transitions and the avoidance of needless repetition. So your first job is to organize the sections into major divisions and their appropriate subdivisions, improve the wordings of headings where you can, and put the sections in the best sequence. In other words, make a classification outline or detailed table of contents. You are allowed to combine two or more topics under one double heading if you need to; or you can phrase broader headings to cover two or more closely related ones from this list. By indentation and/or outline symbols, clearly indicate the level of each heading.

~~~~~

- Background (history and size of job; number and general assignments of personnel)
- The Foreman (duties, qualities)
- Leave Benefits (sickness, vacation)
- Overtime (Saturday, special events; paid as hours off)
- Work Schedule (foreman assigns; adapt to "open" time in offices and classrooms)
- Accessory Items (mops, brushes, brooms, rags; cleaning, storing, replacing)
- Showers (daily cleaning, airing)
- Halls and Stairways (daily cleaning procedures and timing; weekly mopping)
- Bannisters (daily dusting, weekly washing)
- Floors (daily cleaning each of 10 kinds)
- Scrubbing and Waxing (floors; occasional)
- Brick Tile (daily cleaning; occasional scrubbing and waxing)
- Cement Floors (cleaning)
- Soap Dispensers (cleaning, filling)
- Door Hardware (quarterly cleaning)
- Blackboards (daily dusting, fortnightly washing)
- Chalk Trays (daily cleaning, stocking)
- Erasers (cleaning)
- Light Fixtures (occasional cleaning; replacing incandescent bulbs only)
- Walls (cleaning as needed)
- Baseboards (cleaning as needed)
- Furniture (cleaning as needed)
- Floor Machine Brushes (cleaning, storing, replacing)
- Buckets and Wringers (cleaning, oiling)
- Supplies—Janitor Closets (stocking, cleaning, keeping orderly, locking)
- Work Items and Procedures (daily cleaning entrances, rest rooms)
- Glass Doors and Partitions (cleaning as needed)
- Reminders—Day Crew (mainly cautions, emergencies)
- Night Operations (mainly scrubbing and waxing)
- Equipment & Supplies—Window Washers
- Janitor/Maid Daily Duties (list)
- Janitor/Maid—Not Daily Duties (list, done as directed by foremen)
- Janitor/Maid—Do Not Do the Following (limitations on responsibilities)
- The Night Supervisor (duties)
- Stripping, Scrubbing, & Waxing (procedure; done when and where night supervisor directs)
- Reminders—Night Crew (details related to preceding head, plus safety precautions)
- Personal Habits and Appearance (reflect favorably; some reasons for dismissal)
- On-the-Job Conduct and Relationships (get along with faculty, students, fellow workers)

Reporting Maintenance Problems (emergency, general; where, how to report)

Special Events—Window Washing (same 15-man crew for setups at Homecoming, Commencement, registration, etc.)

Window Washing Procedure (foreman designates when, where)

Useful Hints on the Care of Janitorial Equipment (cleaning, keeping in good order; reporting needed repair)

6. Using the data given below, make up two different straight-line trend charts having a different unit scale and write two separate one-page reports. In one report, recommend that the reader (a businessman who likes to play the market) buy 100 shares of common stock of Standard Oil of New Jersey. In the other report advise the reader not to buy at this time. Include the appropriate chart and a market theory with each report.

Opening prices on the preceding 60 Wednesdays:

51 $\frac{1}{8}$	50 $\frac{3}{4}$	48 $\frac{3}{8}$	50 $\frac{1}{4}$	44 $\frac{3}{4}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	41
50 $\frac{5}{8}$	50 $\frac{3}{4}$	47 $\frac{5}{8}$	48 $\frac{3}{8}$	43 $\frac{1}{2}$	41 $\frac{1}{4}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$
50 $\frac{1}{2}$	50 $\frac{1}{4}$	46 $\frac{1}{2}$	47 $\frac{1}{8}$	45	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$
50 $\frac{3}{4}$	49 $\frac{1}{2}$	46 $\frac{1}{8}$	47 $\frac{3}{8}$	45 $\frac{3}{8}$	42	40 $\frac{1}{4}$
53 $\frac{1}{8}$	49 $\frac{3}{8}$	48	47	44 $\frac{1}{4}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{7}{8}$
54 $\frac{1}{2}$	46 $\frac{7}{8}$	50	46 $\frac{3}{8}$	44 $\frac{1}{4}$	42 $\frac{7}{8}$	42 $\frac{1}{4}$
53	48	48 $\frac{1}{4}$	45 $\frac{1}{2}$	41 $\frac{1}{8}$	41 $\frac{1}{2}$	
51 $\frac{1}{4}$	46 $\frac{3}{4}$	47 $\frac{5}{8}$	45 $\frac{1}{2}$	43	41 $\frac{1}{4}$	
51 $\frac{1}{8}$	49 $\frac{1}{2}$	49	45	42 $\frac{1}{4}$	40 $\frac{5}{8}$	

7. Though the following figures are not current, they are fairly recent—for the first nine months of two successive years we'll call Year X and Year Y. The companies were selected as representative of their groups.

For a purpose and situation which your teacher assigns or you assume and make clear, *as of October 10, Year Y*:

- 1) provide an introduction or lead-in to the presentation of the facts;
- 2) start an interpretation of the facts and refer subordinately to a presentation of the data;
- 3) present the facts in the best way you can for your purpose; then
- 4) complete the interpretation.

For your interpretation, you may need to consider:

- 1) a major steel strike in the third quarter of Year X;
- 2) optimism after the steel strike, causing many industries to set up production schedules for sales estimates that never were reached;
- 3) low sales volume early in Year Y, starting widespread price cutting that did little to increase volume but did much to reduce profits; and
- 4) pessimism during the second and third quarters of Year Y, causing most companies to let inventories run low.

	NINE MONTHS YEAR X		NINE MONTHS YEAR Y	
	NET INCOME Thousands of Dollars	PROFIT MARGIN Per Cent	NET INCOME Thousands of Dollars	PROFIT MARGIN Per Cent
<b>CHEMICALS, RUBBER</b>				
A Major Chemical . . . . .	39,707	7.3	41,541	7.4
A Major Rubber . . . . .	28,821	5.0	24,122	4.1
A Major Chemical . . . . .	50,412	8.2	46,475	7.3
Big Specialty Chemical . . . . .	126,999	11.3	117,427	10.1
<b>STEEL</b>				
Small Steel Co. . . . .	8,456	4.7	6,180	3.8
Small Steel Co. . . . .	11,630	9.7	9,427	8.5
Middle Steel Co. . . . .	25,741	4.2	29,619	4.7
Huge Steel Co. . . . .	223,813	7.7	245,888	8.2
Middle Steel Co. . . . .	42,228	5.0	48,719	5.7
<b>BUILDING SUPPLIES</b>				
Plumbing . . . . .	14,448	3.8	9,384	2.6
Insulation . . . . .	13,435	7.0	10,841	5.6
Cement . . . . .	9,323	18.2	7,996	17.6
Cement . . . . .	13,806	16.4	11,255	14.4
Roofing and Insulation . . . . .	23,351	8.4	21,092	7.7
Wallboard . . . . .	20,248	11.7	18,681	10.7
<b>ELECTRONICS, ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT</b>				
Large Electric, Broad Scope . . . . .	189,512	6.0	168,935	5.5
Controls . . . . .	20,781	7.6	18,359	5.9
Appliances . . . . .	27,300	2.8	24,100	2.3
Broad Scope . . . . .	56,225	4.0	60,680	4.2
<b>PAPER, PACKAGING</b>				
Packaging . . . . .	14,609	6.1	14,076	5.7
Paper . . . . .	22,144	6.0	16,766	4.2
Paper . . . . .	17,708	8.1	19,833	8.5
Bag and Paper . . . . .	14,697	9.6	14,540	8.9
<b>MACHINERY</b>				
Farm . . . . .	15,455	4.0	9,032	2.2
General . . . . .	12,996	6.3	16,393	6.7
Earth-moving . . . . .	43,299	7.2	32,758	5.7
General . . . . .	4,426	3.4	5,276	3.7
<b>DRUGS</b>				
A . . . . .	22,215	15.7	22,506	14.9
B . . . . .	19,954	12.2	19,071	11.3
C . . . . .	19,830	19.5	18,461	16.9
D . . . . .	18,429	15.6	17,451	14.7
<b>OFFICE EQUIPMENT</b>				
Machines . . . . .	5,312	2.1	6,198	2.2
Machines . . . . .	101,684	10.8	119,088	11.4
Typewriters . . . . .	-2,346	-	-9,985	-
<b>FOODS, TOBACCO</b>				
Corn Products . . . . .	23,564	4.6	27,640	5.3
Baked Goods . . . . .	17,002	5.4	20,140	6.0
Tobacco . . . . .	66,979	7.0	75,984	7.2

	NINE MONTHS YEAR X		NINE MONTHS YEAR Y	
	NET INCOME Thousands of Dollars	PROFIT MARGIN Per Cent	NET INCOME Thousands of Dollars	PROFIT MARGIN Per Cent
<b>AUTOS</b>				
X .....	339,100	8.5	316,200	8.2
Y .....	725,000	8.2	701,000	7.5
Z .....	15,473	5.4	105	.0
<b>MICELLANEOUS</b>				
Packaging .....	36,709	4.1	23,748	2.7
Photography .....	87,550	14.1	87,719	13.6
Shaving .....	22,477	14.3	26,696	15.6
Aluminum & Chem .....	15,236	4.7	15,739	4.5
Optics/Photography .....	5,968	11.3	5,690	9.6

8. Assume that you are working where you would like to be working five or ten years from now and write a memo to a subordinate directing him to make a certain investigation and prepare a short report with conclusions and recommendations for you.

The problem is of long standing; top men have discussed it and decided they need more information before they meet two weeks hence to make final disposition of the problem. Mention at least one specific point for particular attention. Though you are the boss, watch tone carefully; make clear any time and money allotments for the investigation, the due date, and any time-saving suggestions you have. Mention at least one specific source of information that should be used. Use itemization, charts, tables, or drawings wherever they will help, and use at least three headings.

9. Mr. Victor Morris has decided to redecorate his men's apparel shop. He had originally planned to use the same colors he has had for the last 20 years, medium-gray walls and ceiling, mahogany-colored shelves and counters. But after talking with a paint salesman, he realized that it might be advisable to consider other colors. So he asked you, one of his clerks, to look into the possibilities for decoration of the store and let him know what colors would be most desirable.

The floor is covered in a multicolored vinyl, which is still in good condition and which Mr. Morris does not want to change.

You talked with Mr. Morton Mayer, owner of Mayer Hardware, Inc., who reported a 20 per cent increase in sales after redecorating in light colors. And the manager of the Popular Department Store reported a sales increase of 15 per cent after repainting in white and pastels.

Mr. John B. Boyer, lighting engineer whom you consulted, told you that dark colors absorb both natural and artificial light. Pastel colors make it possible to obtain 100 per cent more light for each watt consumed, without any extra lighting cost. He also added that fluores-

cent or indirect lighting increased visibility, frequently at decreased lighting costs (the Morris Shop now has overhanging direct lighting fixtures).

Mr. Lester Gant, a color expert whom you interviewed, recommended a sea-green paint for the walls and, since the ceiling is high, suggested a darker shade of green to make it seem lower and to harmonize with the walls. He suggested that the shelves and counters be done in the same light green as the walls to create the impression of spaciousness in a narrow room.

Redecorating in these light colors will cost Mr. Morris no more than redecorating in the darker colors, but replacing the light fixtures will.

Write up the necessary report of your findings and recommendation for Mr. Morris.

10. For some time you, as the superintendent of the Well-of-the-Sea Packing Company (Monterey, California), have been concerned over the condition of uniforms worn by the women employees who sort and strip such seafoods as crab, shrimp, and tuna for canning by your company. Some of the uniforms are so soiled and stained that they'd cause trouble if an AAA inspector spotted them on an inspection visit. Others are too worn and/or ill fitting to be considered appropriate for work. Though you have been supplying a clean white uniform daily to these employees (having them laundered and always ready for their use), you decide that the system is not working the way you'd like it to. After talking with several of the supervisors and the women who do the actual food preparation, you decide to allow each employee to draw as many as five uniforms for her use until they wear out, but after that to require them to furnish their own. They will also be responsible for the care (including laundering) of them. You will grant each employee a cash allowance of \$3 a week (which is not subject to taxes) to help absorb this expense. In your memo for distribution to all employees, make clear that they must wear a clean white uniform in good condition each day.
11. As dean, look at all the bulletin boards controlled by people in your college and prepare a memo for all department heads, who are to pass the message on to the responsible persons. Divide the report into at least three sections with a heading for each. The first section will be a clear indication of the purpose of this memo and the importance of using the bulletin boards properly. The last section will be an itemized list of recommendations or requests. Between these two sections you may have several others, but certainly you will want to give some specific statistical data, perhaps in a table or graph, on both proper and improper use and appearance of the bulletin boards. Though you are the dean, watch tone carefully.
12. For some years the company for which you are plant manager has operated a company cafeteria serving breakfast from 6 to 8, lunch

from 11:30 to 1:30, and supper from 4:30 to 6. In addition, a snack bar has operated from 6 A.M. to 12 midnight. But because of increased costs and difficulty in securing help and a steady decrease in number of employees eating supper in the cafeteria, you are faced with the necessity of curtailing service. As an alternative to increasing the prices employees pay at present, you and the cafeteria manager have decided to eliminate the supper and breakfast meal service in the cafeteria, to provide service in the snack bar from 6:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M., and to expand the selection of food in the snack bar. The only meal offered, however, will be the noon meal. Address the memo to all employees.

13. At work as the safety director of a large manufacturing firm in the nearby metropolitan area, you'd like to run a series of safety posters on the bulletin boards of each department. You can get many good ideas from books and articles (and have some of your own). But you feel that the men (and women) on the job can probably come up with even better ideas. In your memo for distribution to all operators remind them that they can get suggestion blanks from their supervisor and tell them that any suggestions they make for suitable themes of posters (the purpose of which, of course, is to reduce or eliminate accidents) which are used will be acknowledged or rewarded in line with current provisions of the employee-suggestion plan.
14. To inform all employees of the local plant (where you are controller) of changes in distribution of pay checks, prepare a memo for general distribution. Under the revised plan employees will no longer go to the payroll windows in the plant administration building but will receive their pay checks in their respective departments starting at 10. Distribution of pay checks will cease at 12. Payrolls will be figured from Wednesday through the following Tuesday so that checks will be ready for distribution Thursday morning. As a convenience to those absent from work on Thursday, the payroll office will mail checks Thursday afternoon so that they will be received at the desired address by Friday (or Saturday at the latest). You are including with the memo a perforated form so that employees may verify their mailing addresses. No pay will be distributed from the payroll office.
15. On almost every sizable project, the top people in charge (usually those paying for the work) expect the immediate supervisor or foreman to report from time to time on the progress of the project. And almost everybody has some considerable project under way—if nothing more, a term paper or report, your quest for a degree, construction of something, . . .

Assuming that the most likely interested party wants a progress report on a project you have under way, prepare the report in memo or other appropriate form. Remember to use divisional headings, itemizations, and graphic devices anywhere they will help the reader understand more clearly, quickly, or easily.

The big questions to answer are whether you are on schedule and are likely to finish on schedule. If not, why not and when. Sometimes you include difficulties encountered or foreseen, and sometimes you ask for approval of a change of schedule or plan, material, design, or procedure to get around a difficulty. Always you make clear what has been done, present status, what remains to be done, and plans for completion.

16. Analyze the following tabulations and make pertinent observations and appropriate suggestions to the head of the Business Writing Department for maintaining more uniform and equitable grade distributions by the three instructors concerned. The grades for the business correspondence course were awarded over the five academic periods immediately preceding the time of this report. Set it up in the form of a memo or letter, whichever your instructor specifies. (Parenthetical figures are approximate percentages.)

Instructor M (total of 381 students)

A	B	C	D	F
18 (4.7)	119 (31.2)	161 (42.3)	61 (18.6)	22 (3.2)

Instructor N (total of 697 students)

A	B	C	D	F
56 (8)	151 (21.7)	379 (54.5)	68 (9.8)	43 (6)

Instructor O (total of 808 students)

A	B	C	D	F
23 (2.8)	297 (36.8)	409 (50.6)	58 (7.2)	21 (2.6)

17. Summary report in either memo or letter form (as your teacher directs):

Assume that you are director of the Public Opinion Research Institute, Syracuse University. You have just completed a comprehensive analysis of public survey techniques. In the morning's campus mail comes a request from the Director of Advanced Studies for a summary evaluation of personal interviews, telephone interviews, and mail questionnaires as research procedures. "Something that could be summarized in three or four typewritten pages and mimeographed for quick reading by our students," he writes.

For assistance in preparing this summary of advantages and limitations, review the discussion in your text and supplement with references/coverage that you can find in library references. Check statistics books and publications on public opinion surveying and poll-taking.

18. The Household Electric Company is located in St. Paul, Minnesota, and has affiliated plants in St. Louis and Chicago. The home office is located in downtown Chicago. Sales of the Household line (produced by the St. Paul plant) have grown until the plant has become

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inadequate. There is no available land near the present plant, and its foundation will not carry additional stories. The company is considering building at one of three locations: a new location in St. Paul; Aurora, Illinois; or Jefferson Park, Chicago.

A new plant 450 by 250 feet, with a second floor 60 by 250 feet for offices, and adequate sources for power, air, water, and including a building site, would cost about \$350,000 in Aurora, and 10 per cent more in Chicago or St. Paul. The Chamber of Commerce of Aurora offered to donate a site of 20 acres, served by a highway and two railroads, with all utilities brought to the site. The site, its present worth being about \$25,000, lies just outside the city limits and would therefore enjoy a low tax rate.

The expenses of moving the equipment and inventories to Aurora or Jefferson Park would amount to approximately \$60,000. The expense of moving to a new site in St. Paul would be about \$20,000. Should it move out of St. Paul, the company would have to pay the moving expenses of 12 executives, which are estimated at approximately \$3,000 for each man who could be moved to either Chicago or Aurora.

During the past year executives of the company spent \$8,000 in traveling between the Chicago office and the St. Paul plant. In addition, \$2,000 was spent in telephone calls. Moreover, the company paid \$18,000 in Minnesota state income taxes for the year. The site considered in Aurora is approximately 40 miles from downtown Chicago. A private wire from this site to the home office would cost \$1 a mile a month. Traveling expenses between Aurora and Chicago are estimated at \$50 a month. No state income taxes are levied in Illinois.

Total yearly wages in St. Paul have averaged \$435,000. There will be no appreciable difference in the number of workers required in the new plant. Lower prevailing wage rates in Aurora would decrease total expenditures a year for wages by 3 per cent. Higher prevailing rates in Chicago would increase yearly wage expenditures by 2 per cent.

On the basis of these data, where should the plant move? Write to Mr. J. B. Phillips, president of the company, giving him your recommendation and including comparative costs on construction and operation for the first year. Submit it in the form your instructor specifies.

19. You are the credit union officer of the Acme Corporation employee credit union, which has about \$10,000 representing shares bought by employees, for lending to fellow workers. It has just recently been activated.

Prepare a memo for distribution to all employees, announcing the institution of the plan and availability of the money, provided that

the loan application is approved. Employees have to pay a \$1 fee for membership. Invite additional investment; you expect to pay a 5 per cent return. Employees pay 1 per cent a month interest, figured on the exact number of days the money is used. For the time being, the three-man committee that reviews all loan applications has decided on a \$300 limit for any loan.

20. Preparatory to registration for the next session of your college, write a memo for the dean (or the director, or the head) to be distributed to all staff members connected with enrolling students. Remind them to check prerequisites for each course carefully; far too many students have had to add and drop courses after classes were under way because registration or enrollment personnel put students in classes for which they were not prepared. Emphasize that the normal load for a student with a C average is 17 or 18 hours (or credits); that students with a B average may carry 19, and those with an A average as high as 21—but only upon written permission from the dean's (or director's, or head's) office. No student under any circumstances may carry 22 hours. Nor may any student on campus carry less than 12. Any person attempting to register for less than 12 should have written permission from the appropriate office indicating that he is either a nondegree (special) student or that he needs only a certain number less than 12 hours to complete his degree requirements. Only a student who has received a grade of F in a course may re-enroll for the second time; having received a minimum passing grade or an X or Incomplete or Deferred, he may not begin again from the beginning. Registration officials should be careful to see that students are admitted only at the times designated for them; if they are late, they have to register the last afternoon of the last day of registration; they should not be allowed to usurp the time of students who do report on time.
21. In the role of the industrial relations director for National Rolling Mill, Inc., write a memo authorizing one of your assistants to submit a report evaluating various "SUB" plans now in operation in steel, auto, aluminum, rubber, and glass industries. "SUB" stands for supplemental unemployment benefits. You'd like to have as thorough a study of the various plans as is possible to obtain through available sources (magazine articles, annual reports, monographs, books) to aid your thinking and planning for an eventuality in your own company that is rapidly assuming the form of a reality. Indicate a time by which you want the report.
22. For the president of your institution prepare a directive to go to all faculty and staff members reminding them of the fact that most of the buildings on your campus are equipped with automatic sprinkler protection with an alarm bell as part of the system. In all cases the alarm bells are located on the outside walls of the buildings on the ground floor. When water begins to flow through the sprinkler system, the alarm bell rings. All persons in buildings so equipped should

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be aware of the fact that there is such protection and of the location of the bell. The reason for this memo is that on the 18th of last month a broken water line of the sprinkler system in the Administration Building caused approximately \$1,000 damages. Several people heard the ringing of the water-flow alarm bell but did not notify the police or fire department because they were unaware of what was happening. As part of this memo you are listing all the buildings so equipped and the location of the bell. You want each employee to know the status of the building(s) where he works—and teachers to announce to their classes in buildings where applicable.

23. As plant manager for Prosser and Lisle, Inc., Indianapolis, prepare a directive in memo form for distribution to all employees. In it you will want to tell them that a parking-control system is being inaugurated effective in one week's time. Parking spaces will be numbered, and each employee needing parking space will be issued a sticker corresponding to the parking space he is to occupy. Cars without stickers and cars with sticker numbers not corresponding to the number of the parking space will be towed away. They will not be released except on payment of a \$5 fine. The fine will be the same amount regardless of the number of violations. Employees may pick up their stickers at the Employment Office any time between 8:30 and 5:30 during the next week; after that, the office will observe its usual hours of 9:00 to 5:00.
24. As advertising manager of *Teenage* magazine for girls you have just had your assistant do a thorough, up-to-date, nation-wide study of the newly-wed market. You got the idea from all the questions being asked around your house about prospective purchases by your recently married eighteen-year-old daughter. Emphasis in the report was on the ages at which girls are getting engaged and married and on the kinds of purchases newly-weds make. Pertinent findings:

- median age for engagements, just over seventeen
- mode of marrying ages, eighteen
- over 500,000 teen-age girls marry annually
- a third of the eighteen- and nineteen-year-old girls are housewives
- besides the rings and hundreds of relatively inexpensive items which you'll see around any home, newly-weds usually buy furniture, linens, silver, appliances, draperies (or have bought for them).

Those findings are just about what you had come to expect, from having lived through the recent marriage of your daughter. But from the standpoint of your job they mean this: Your advertising salesmen have been missing the boat in not selling advertising to the manufacturers of "goods newly-weds buy" because the salesmen have been thinking of *Teenage* readers as unmarried high-school and college and office and store-clerking and do-nothing girls. Now you realize

that many of your readers are married and many of the single ones are only a few steps from the altar—engaged, or soon to be engaged and married, and soon to be buying the “goods newly-weds buy.”

Write a memo to be distributed to your seven salesmen to start them calling on manufacturers whom they have been ignoring because of the erroneous thinking that those manufacturers’ products were for homes, married people, rather than *Teenage* readers. Cite whatever you think you need from the report findings.

25. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has just made some policy changes and has turned them over to you (the Commission’s executive secretary) to execute. Because you also prepare news releases and news-release pickup time is crowding, you have already prepared the following release:

New FCC policies will limit interstation communication to five of the 23 CB (Citizens Band Radio) frequencies, limit communication time to three minutes instead of five, and limit types of communications permitted, according to a memorandum going out to all holders of CB licenses.

Channels assigned to CB were intended for *necessary* personal communication. With the increase in licensees from 40,000 in 1958 to 350,000 currently, abuses have crept in. Most of the abuses—use of CB for hobby and amusement chatting—stem from communications between stations of different licensees, whereas the service was intended primarily for communication between units of the same station.

Two slightly different forms of the memo are going out—one to licensees who have not been reported for violation of specified use, another to violators (with a warning). Each licensee is invited to apply for change of channel if his channel number (after his name in the memo) does not allow him the use he wants to make of his CB and if he can justify the change.

Now you are to prepare the form memos (showing the two different messages) for your office girls to get out to CB licensees.

26. As city manager in a sizable city with an excellent three-year-old city hall, you want to write a justification report to the five city commissioners recommending two daily 20-minute breaks for employees and an arrangement for an employee snack bar in available space in the hall.

Though breaks have never been approved, your talks with the nine department heads and every tenth name on alphabetical lists of employees reveal that about 67 per cent of the employees take one or more anyway (15–40 minutes), conscientious workers resent the liberties taken by others and others feel guilty, and department heads have quit trying to prevent the unapproved breaks.

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The city attorney says your proposals are legal, within the power of the commissioners to authorize.

Your proposed breaks are in line with allowed "coffee-break" time of at least half the business and industrial firms of the city and with the nation-wide practices of three-fourths of such firms (as reported in a recent study by the National Office Management Association, *Coffee Breaks in U.S. Business and Industry*, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 11).

Three usual restrictions—which you would want to attach—are that no more than half the employees of a department may be out at any time, breaks longer than 20 minutes will result in deduction of an hour's pay (though with good cause and special approval of the immediate superior, an employee may occasionally combine his two breaks for the day), and "break" time is *not* to compensate for tardiness or early departure.

The doctoral dissertation—*Efficiency and the Coffee Break*, Harvard Press, Boston, 1961, p. 261—of E. E. Jennings, professor of personnel management, Harvard, found that breaks up to 20 minutes increase office-worker efficiency (4 per cent morning, 6 per cent afternoon).

Adapting the selected space will cost \$1,700, by bid of the contractor who built the city hall.

From three restaurant owners who would like the concession, the best offer was from a reputable one of the city: a five-year lease renewable by mutual agreement, at \$100 a month plus 2 per cent of gross profit.

The Hall is three blocks from any restaurant.

27. Using the information in Robert Wallace's "Please Remit," *Life*, December 21, 1953, pp. 42-46, 49-50, 52 (reprinted in the "Credits and Collections" section of *Writing for Business*),
  - a) Assume that the subject of the report in that article has just opened a small store of some kind in your community,
  - b) Assume that you are the local Dun & Bradstreet reporter,
  - c) Assume that you have been to the new store and observed carefully,
  - d) Use calculated guesses for needed information that is not in the article and that you can't reasonably assume you got through observation, and
  - e) Write a credit report covering all the kinds of information mentioned in the section on "Credit Reports" in this chapter of your book.
28. Take a local, not too large retail store (chosen by you or assigned by your teacher) and
  - a) Assume that you are the local Dun & Bradstreet reporter,
  - b) Get as much information as you can (like that in the preceding problem) by observing at the store and talking with store personnel,

- c) Use calculated guesses for needed information that you can't get (like financial data), and
- d) Write up a credit report on the business.
29. Representing Don and Street, you investigate a community grocery store at 1006 West Bravon, Mobile, Alabama, operated by two brothers, Edward and Charles Brown. When interviewed, they refused to furnish copy of recent financial statement. Premises are rented from relatives. In a two-story building, old but well maintained. Sell standard brands, fresh fruits and vegetables, etc., on cash basis. Partners born in Houston, Texas. Active in the business. Have two clerks. New fixtures would bring about \$3,000 in forced sale. Modern methods of merchandising used. Handbill ads efficiently used in their progressive neighborhood. Good trade. Nationality—German descent. Worked at odd jobs before war, construction workers at local air bases during war, pooled their savings, and started the business June, 1945, in building owned by an aunt. Owe approximately \$300 to be paid on fixtures July 1. No bank account in firm's name. One large chain grocery in next block. Store is well lighted. Upper floor is used for dwelling purposes. Business has been successful. Various improvements have been made. Because of close competition, prices are low. Store occupies space 18' by 35' in frame building. Merchandise well arranged on shelves and specially constructed counters. They have an established business and apparently have affairs in satisfactory condition. Two suppliers were consulted. One sells to them on weekly terms with a high credit of \$700, and payments are prompt, usually discounting. New fixtures and equipment were installed in August, on which payments are almost complete. Located in outlying middle-class residential section on west side. Edward, age thirty, is married. Charles, age thirty-one, is divorced. One supplier reports sales on 2/10, n/30 terms with high credit of \$300; occasionally 15–30 days slow but considered satisfactory account. Interior of store has been redecorated. Rating N4. Appears to be progressive. Most purchases are made on weekly terms from local wholesale grocers. A meat market is in a similar building on the east, and a bakery occupies a two-story brick building on the west. Surrounding premises orderly. One fire reported July, 1945: trash fire got out of control; burned back wall slightly. Efficient Mobile fire department quickly extinguished. Covered by insurance.

Write the report you would submit.

### Short Analytical Reports

1. Assume that you received, instead of wrote, the memo mentioned in case 8, p. 566, that you've completed the investigation authorized, and that you're now ready to write the report. Write it.
2. Assume that in planning to reorganize its undergraduate curriculum, the marketing department, where you are assistant to the head, has

sent a questionnaire to all 94 members of the AACSB (American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business) and 395 other colleges and universities. Of these, 256 (52.4 per cent) have replied, though many of them have few or no marketing courses.

The head of the department (your boss) has dumped the whole lot on your desk with instructions to tabulate them, study them, and write up a report for him and the rest of the marketing faculty to consider before revising and rewriting for the dean, the college curriculum committee, and ultimately the whole faculty of the college of business. Fortunately for you, the questionnaire asked that credit hours always be figured as semester hours.

You have found that 81.9 per cent of the AACSB schools replied. Six replies came from graduate schools of business; so you have not tabulated them. Seventeen other replies were unusable for various reasons. Of the remaining 233 replies, which you have tabulated, 70 are AACSB schools and 140 offer degrees in marketing.

You now have each question with the tabulations under it (the following tables). Now the real headwork begins. You have yet to organize the findings for best interpretation and presentation, to figure out the best tables and graphics to use in the presentation, to interpret the findings, and to write up your results in the best form and style you can muster. Don't just sit there; do something.

"For each of the courses listed in the following table, put M in the column indicating your opinion about its importance to marketing Majors and B in the column indicating its importance to Business students not majoring in marketing." (Usable replies: 228.)

Course Title	Required		Desirable		Less Desirable		Not Necessary		No Answer	
	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B
Principles of Marketing ..	226	199	1	21	0	0	1	3	0	5
Retailing .....	130	12	65	64	8	42	9	48	16	62
Retail Sales Promotion ..	19	1	57	9	62	38	45	93	45	87
Advertising .....	168	34	44	83	8	31	2	26	6	54
Advanced Advertising ..	18	2	62	5	70	30	40	113	38	78
Salesmanship .....	105	39	50	57	37	28	18	51	18	53
Wholesaling .....	46	1	83	21	49	44	21	85	29	77
Industrial Marketing ....	35	4	105	21	42	43	16	88	30	72
Marketing Management ..	139	23	54	59	8	36	6	51	21	59
Retail Store Management ..	26	0	73	14	52	43	38	98	39	73
Sales Management .....	104	13	72	45	10	45	5	54	27	71
Marketing Research .....	170	12	41	61	9	43	1	44	7	65
Advanced Mktg. Theory ..	56	2	77	18	49	29	16	104	30	75
Purchasing .....	33	8	79	33	61	38	22	79	33	70
Marketing Case Problems ..	101	15	72	32	18	37	6	75	31	69
Product Development ..	12	1	66	13	67	30	41	107	42	77
Agricultural Marketing ..	6	1	33	3	75	25	69	121	45	78
Co-operative Marketing ..	5	0	24	5	64	17	90	129	45	77
Distribution Cost Analysis ..	40	7	95	35	39	39	18	76	36	71
Supervised Field Work ..	20	1	63	12	42	17	56	119	47	79
Independent Research ..	29	3	77	29	40	20	37	100	45	76
Mktg. of Specific Products ..	1	0	15	0	36	6	111	127	65	95

"Please indicate the number of semester hours you think should be required of marketing majors." (Usable replies: 231.)

	<i>None</i>	<i>1-3</i>	<i>4-6</i>	<i>7-9</i>	<i>10 or Over</i>
Accounting .....	1	7	133	62	28
Business Statistics .....	7	135	81	5	3
Business Math. ....	82	115	31	3	0
Finance .....	21	116	78	12	4
Business Law .....	13	77	130	10	1
Business History .....	171	55	5	0	0
Introduction to Bus. ....	137	87	7	0	0
Business Cycles .....	116	112	3	0	0
Real Estate .....	206	25	1	0	0
Business Education .....	226	2	1	2	0
Insurance .....	153	66	12	0	0
Business Research .....	108	112	9	2	0
Management .....	35	139	45	10	2
Personnel .....	95	118	17	0	1
Policy and Adminin. ....	112	107	10	2	0
Production .....	118	104	8	1	0
Human Relations .....	140	75	16	0	0
Foreign Trade .....	166	60	2	1	2
Transportation .....	127	94	6	2	2
Business Writing .....	80	131	20	0	0
Secretarial Training .....	205	22	4	0	0

"Please indicate the number of semester hours you think should be required of marketing majors in these nonbusiness areas." (Usable replies: 224.)

	<i>None</i>	<i>1-3</i>	<i>4-6</i>	<i>7-9</i>	<i>10 or Over</i>
Language Arts (Any) . . .					
English . . . .	14	4	114	40	52
Modern Language . . .	157	8	37	5	17
Classical Lang. . . .	221	1	2	0	0
Speech . . . .	45	136	40	3	0
Humanities (Any) . . . .					
Philosophy . . . .	99	85	20	5	14
Religion . . . .	173	15	26	5	5
Literature . . . .	106	34	77	4	3
Architecture . . . .	221	3	0	0	0
Art . . . .	172	*40	5	0	0
Music . . . .	188	*27	2	0	0
Social Sciences (Any) . . . .					
Anthropology . . . .	193	26	5	0	0
Economics . . . .	10	3	102	48	61
Geography . . . .	146	64	13	1	0
History . . . .	88	30	94	6	6
Political Science . . . .	104	73	44	2	1
Psychology . . . .	55	102	54	7	6
Sociology . . . .	99	95	25	4	1
Laboratory Science (Any) . . . .					
Biology . . . .	190	18	12	4	0
Chemistry . . . .	200	13	8	3	0
Geology . . . .	218	3	3	0	0
Physics . . . .	205	9	9	1	0
Mathematics . . . .	54	51	84	21	13
Journalism . . . .	203	18	3	0	0

\* Seven said either art or music.

3. To test the effects of its direct mail, as suggested in Chapter IX on sales letters, the national advertiser where you work has employed a national fact-finding interview service (called Factseekers, Inc.). The co-operative manufacturer-retailer direct-mail campaign involved six monthly mailings April through September, each clearly identifying local retailer, product, and manufacturer. Between 10 and 20 days after the last mailing, interviewers talked to people at 1,670 of the addresses in twelve cities of 60,000 or more (one city in each of the company's marketing divisions). Interviewers called at normal mail-delivery time, so as to talk with the person normally receiving the mail, and talked to 75 per cent women and 25 per cent men. In each city interviewers attempted to have about 50 interviews in each of three separate retailers' neighborhoods.

The interviewers have tabulated their results and turned them in. As an employee in the Research Department, you have the job of presenting the facts and interpretations of facts in a report for the vice-president in charge of advertising. So here are the findings along with some details of procedure.

To check the respondents' recognition, reading, and passing-on of the campaign pieces, interviewers first used only the last mailing (September) and masked retailer, product, and manufacturer identifications. Results: Seen by 966 or 57.8 per cent of the 1,670; product identified by 83.7 per cent of the 966, manufacturer identified by 79.8 per cent, retailer by 64.8 per cent, his location by 70.2 per cent. Of the whole 1,670, 27.1 per cent had read part of the September mailing, 18.4 per cent at least a fifth of it. Those 966 who remembered seeing the piece *knew* they had shown it to 427 others and *thought* to 292 more. Other findings show 50.4 per cent of the husbands saw the mailing, and probably 20.5 per cent more; and 90.1 per cent of the husbands buy the product (not all this brand!), as do 47 per cent of the wives.

Further findings were based on the whole campaign of six mailings, without identifications being masked. Of the 1,670, 77.2 per cent remembered seeing at least one mailing: April, 41.3; May, 39.2; June (a mechanized pop-up), 44.4; July, 31.9; August, 34.9; September 57.8. Of the 77.2 per cent, 69.3 per cent got a favorable impression of the retailer, 30.7 per cent no particular impression. Of all the 1,670, 97 per cent said they thought the advertising retailer could serve them satisfactorily, 0.3 per cent no, and 2.7 per cent didn't know or didn't answer. More specifically:

	<i>Saw None</i>	<i>Saw Sept. Only</i>	<i>Saw One or More Apr.-Aug.</i>	<i>Saw Sept. &amp; One or More Others</i>
Favorable impression				
of retailer .....	34.5%	48.8%	59.5%	77.8%
No impression .....	53.5	41.5	35.6	16.2
Don't know .....	12.0	9.7	4.9	6.0

Favorable opinion of direct mail in general, 69.9 per cent; unfavorable, 23.5 per cent (7.8 per cent pay no attention to it, 5.1 per cent no comment, 3 per cent don't have time, 2.9 per cent waste of time and money, 1.7 per cent throw away unread). More specifically:

	Saw None	Saw Sept. Only	Saw One or More Apr.-Aug.	Saw Sept. & One or More Others
Favorable to DM ....	44%	57%	72%	84%
Unfavorable .....	41	30	25	13
Don't know .....	15	13	3	3

Reasons for buying where they do: Like retailer personally, 44.6 per cent; convenient location, 37.4 per cent; good service, 34.0 per cent; like product (not all this advertiser's), 21.3 per cent.

4. Assume that you are any one of the three authors of Wilkinson, Menning, and Anderson, *Writing for Business* (latest available edition) and that the three of you are considering a revision. Further assume one of the following and prepare a report for the other two authors and the publisher in the form your teacher assigns:

- A. (Take this one only if you have had or are taking a course that involves both letter writing and report writing.) Without changing the organization or size of the book very much, you are to make an evaluation of each article and recommend that it be kept, omitted, or replaced if a better one can be found for the new edition.

In your report you will need to explain the *criteria* you use in evaluating the articles and the *methods* you use. (Your instructor may or may not require that you use some method(s) in addition to your own personal evaluation.)

After you have evaluated the existing articles, you are then to find new articles to include in the new edition—enough to constitute between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the new book. Naturally you will use essentially the same criteria for new articles that you apply to existing ones. Preferably new ones should be no older than five years, though you may not want to apply such a rigid standard to all of those in the present book. For new articles, you may assume that you can get permission to reprint, to cut out certain unimportant sections, and to make minor editing changes.

For each new article you will give full bibliographical information, brief indication of the contents, explanation of why you think it a worthy addition, and indication of what section it should go in.

- B. (Same conditions as A.) Without changing the articles or size of the book, propose and justify a complete reorganization. Your proposal will indicate the number and sequence of divi-

sions and the articles and sequence in each division. In other words, you are to make a new table of contents without page numbers.

- C. (Take this one only if you have had or are taking a course in letter writing.) Do as explained in A, except limit your treatment to the first nine divisions of the book (on letters).
  - D. (Take this one only if you have had or are taking a course in report writing.) Do as explained in A, except limit your treatment to the last section (on report writing), which you may decide to break up into several sections.
5. Mr. A. Mayer Johns, president of the Burns Company, Rockford, manufacturers of hardware supplies, authorized you, marketing analyst of the Cornell Research Agency, 8 Maine Street, Chicago, to investigate hardware repackaging possibilities and to give him your report before the board of directors meets the end of next month.

Your first step was to compare hardware boxes, others' as well as those of the Burns Company, with packages of other merchandise—foods, for example. You found that most hardware boxes are gray, brown, or a dingy white, are shelved with their smallest side outward, and contain copy so limited that only an experienced builder's hardware man can identify the large number of different products they contain. Most labels are muddy-colored and contain no pictures. Other merchandising packages, however, are colorful and attractive. Food packages, as a rule, are shelved with their side outward. They employ an over-all design—in one to four colors—which generally has copy on all sides. Text includes selling arguments and directions for use. Colors are clear and strong. Pictures, appearing often on more than one side, show the product, the product in use, or some distinctive trademark.

To gauge the effect of packaging on sales, you had a trained staff of interviewers question buyers in 35 retail stores geographically distributed over the Middle West. This was the questionnaire used and the results:

1. Did you purchase any article or articles today that you had not planned to buy when you entered the store? Yes: 7,500; No: 2,500
2. If answer to No. 1 is *yes*: What prompted your purchase of the additional article(s)? Respondents gave more than one reason; most frequently mentioned:
  - a) Seeing it on the shelf reminded me I needed it: 4,025
  - b) The colorful package was so attractive that I impulsively bought it: 6,420
  - c) The picture on the package made me want to try the product: 5,510
  - d) It looked like a good buy at the price: 3,960
3. All respondents: Does the package of a product ever help you decide which brand to buy? Yes: 8,220; No: 1,780

4. Do you look for trademarks when deciding which brand to buy? Yes: 6,120; No: 3,880
5. Do you like to see the contents of the package fully listed on the label? Yes: 7,530; No: 2,470
6. Do you usually read instructions printed on packages? Yes: 6,180; No: 3,190

In "Packages at Work" (*Modern Packaging*, September, 1963, p. 32) Frank J. Norton states: "The trade-mark identification should be the most conspicuous item on any side of the container that might conceivably be displayed on the retail shelf. In order to make it easy for every store employee to identify the product, the name and a picture of the product should occupy the bulk of the available space."

Mrs. Patricia M. Stewart, in her book *Packages That Sell* (Gateway Publishing Company, New York, 1962), gives some helpful suggestions applicable to hardware packaging on pages 25-26: "The box must be an eye-catcher in color, design, or shape. . . . As to color—brilliant red is definitely a good eye-catcher and one seldom seen on a hardware shelf. It contrasts well with a second color of either yellow, silver, or black that could be used to symbolize the principal finishes of the line. For customer recognition the package should have the trade name always prominently displayed; the basic red color used not only on the boxes but also in trade and consumer advertising; and package illustrations that are a reasonably accurate repetition of the product illustrations in other media. The chief stimulant to impulse buying will be the picture of the package contents, plus the general pleasing quality appearance of the boxes themselves. The selling argument should appear in slogan form right on the packages, an impelling phrase being matched to each product."

In his article, "What a Good Package Should Do" (*Printed Selling*, June 21, 1963), Mr. Burton J. Curry comments on hardware packaging on page 54: "The package should tell in simplest form the salient points to be stressed by the clerk. The proper use of the product is another thing the package can tell the sales clerk. Package inserts giving directions for the use and installation of the product should be simple, easy to understand, and written in such a way as to continue to sell the product. The package insert can also be used to sell related items. The insert in the box in which a purchaser carries home a new front door lock will suggest the purchase of a rear door lock, etc."

Submit your report with title page, brief transmittal letter, and the analysis itself.

6. The owners of the Southland Nursery, Atlanta (Mr. James Burton and Mr. Paul Goode), have asked you, the office manager, to submit a report analyzing demand over the past few years.

So you've gone through the sales records of the past four years to see what sells the best as a guide to what to plant the most of, what to reduce, and maybe even what to discontinue. Classifications are hard

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to set up (for instance, there's no way to tell what kinds of roses are in most frequent demand—but at 60¢ average sale it's a safe bet that not many prize rose bushes are sold). But you've worked out the classifications, the number of bushes sold for the last four years, and the average sale of each variety.

Your records show that you average about 5 per cent replacements (that is, about 5 out of every 100 plants sold have to be replaced under the terms of your replacement policy: replacement at one-half price if the plant dies within the first year). Your profit margin is about 50 per cent.

Study the figures for what they imply in the way of increasing or decreasing demand for particular types and for the relative profitability of the various items. Then make recommendations about this next year's stock.

Submit the report to the owners in attractive, readable form. Use a title page as a cover, a letter of transmittal which is also an epitome, and the analysis itself.

**GROSS SALES OF SHRUBBERY SOLD BY THE SOUTHLAND  
NURSERY IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS**

	4 Years Ago	3 Years Ago	2 Years Ago	Last Year	Average Sale
Abelia .....	2,896	2,980	4,422	4,460	\$0.75
Ashfodi Juniper .....	136	144	202	235	1.00
Azalea .....	2,940	3,672	6,440	8,756	2.00
Berkman Arbor Vitae .....	146	102	137	165	1.10
Boxwood .....	126	262	344	423	6.00
Camellias .....	2,888	3,070	4,175	5,480	4.00
Cherry Laurel .....	174	198	234	256	3.00
Dogwood .....	81	76	143	166	1.75
Gardenia .....	1,178	1,239	1,897	1,976	3.00
Ilex Bullata .....	602	875	1,092	1,160	1.50
Ilex Burfordi .....	247	288	370	406	2.00
Ilex Rotundifoli .....	1,786	1,930	2,706	2,816	1.00
Irish Juniper .....	176	189	259	278	1.00
Ligustrum .....	2,982	2,646	4,562	4,250	1.50
Nandina .....	3,364	3,544	3,782	3,802	1.00
Pfitzer Juniper .....	2,078	2,108	2,986	3,208	0.75
Photina Glabra .....	472	381	277	199	0.60
Roses .....	7,271	7,492	8,792	9,879	0.60
Sargent Barberry .....	601	507	488	462	1.00
Spirea .....	192	160	107	126	0.90
Spirea Thunbergi .....	148	164	92	86	1.25
Yellow Jasmine .....	296	243	203	194	2.00
Total .....	31,782	32,726	43,710	48,683	.....

- One of the junior executives of Burns, Incorporated, of Los Angeles, a large manufacturer of women's clothing, suggested to the president of the company, C. D. Janes, that improvement was needed in the company's correspondence. When the president brought the matter

before the board of directors, there was a good deal of discussion. Some of the members felt that the suggestion was ridiculous. "Everyone in our firm knows how to write letters," one member remarked.

Enough of the members were interested, however, to pass a motion that the subject should be investigated. Accordingly, the president authorized you, one of his assistants, to determine whether correspondence improvement was needed and, if so, how it could be effected. He gave you a month.

Your first step was to read current material on letter-improvement programs. The following excerpts from current publications you considered significant:

"Conservative estimates place the cost of letters at at least \$1.83 each. That means that many companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly on correspondence. To get their money's worth, they must be sure that every letter helps to improve public relations." *Source: Article by Henry Howard in U.S. Business, May, page 29, entitled "Cutting Correspondence Costs."*

"Bring in an instructor who has had experience in writing letters as well as in teaching. Have him conduct regular classes for several weeks. Require all members of the firm connected with letter writing—from the president to the typist—to attend. Then watch your letters improve!" *Source: Unsigned feature in Printers' Week, January, page 37, "Letter Training Program Pays Off!"*

The January *Printers' Week*, on page 54, listed the names of 57 companies which had carried out letter-improvement programs. To find out what results those companies had obtained, you sent a questionnaire to the president of each. The questions and replies (55) were as follows:

- I. What do you believe was the effect of your letter-improvement program on the quality of the company's letters?
  1. Considerable improvement: 39
  2. Slight improvement: 6
  3. No noticeable difference: 1
- II. What was the attitude of most of the correspondents toward the program?
  1. Favorable: 42
  2. Unfavorable: 4
  3. Indifferent: 9
- III. What do you believe was the effect of the program on your company's customer relations?
  1. Considerable improvement: 38
  2. Slight improvement: 11
  3. No apparent change: 6

## IV. Do you have a correspondence manual?

1. Yes: 28
2. No: 27

## V. If yes, to IV, please answer these:

## A. Do you believe it has helped to improve letter quality?

1. Yes: 24
2. No: 2
3. Don't know: 2

## B. What was the approximate cost of issuing it?

- |                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Less than \$200: | 5  |
| \$200-\$300:     | 4  |
| \$300-\$500:     | 12 |
| \$500 and over:  | 7  |

## VI. Do you have a correspondence supervisor or someone who assumes such duties?

1. Yes: 32
2. No: 23

## VII. If yes to VI, do you believe the supervisor has helped to improve letter quality?

1. Yes: 32
2. No: 0
3. Don't know: 0

Respondents were invited to comment on each question and promised anonymity if quoted. Following are some typical comments:

"Since completion of our training program, we have received fewer complaints than ever before and many customers have written letters of appreciation."

"The letter improvement classes we held five years ago made correspondents conscious of their responsibilities for several months. But since there was no supervisor to encourage consistent effort to make letters effective, correspondents became lax again. Our new program provides for a supervisor who will hold regular classes for discussion of letter problems."

"On the whole, both correspondents and typists appreciated the constructive criticism of the instructor. Nearly all were enthusiastic when they realized how important their letters were in building good will for the company."

"The correspondence manual issued at the close of our training period served to crystallize the information presented by the instructor. It is always available for quick reference."

Meanwhile, you looked over 200 letters selected at random from the letters typed in one week by the 40 typists employed by the company. (There are about 85 dictators in the company averaging 50 letters per week.)

You found these facts:

- 15 variations in mechanical makeup
- 40 spelling errors
- 25 errors in sentence structure
- 62 participial closings
- 14 paragraphs of 15 lines or more
- 5 letters of only one sentence
- 10 letters averaging 32 words per sentence
- 54 trite expressions
- 49 instances of wordiness
- 36 expressions that would be offensive to readers
- 48 letters that were correct, complete, and original
- 33 letters that left questions unanswered
- 16 cases when the dictator individually dictated practically the same message to three or more individuals

When you interviewed Dr. R. R. Brawner of Del Monte, a professional consultant in business letters, he explained the program he has carried out in many companies. He favors classes of 2 hours each for all the correspondents and typists connected with the firm for 10 weeks. He analyzes letters dictated by each correspondent and gives individual suggestions. He stressed that, for favorable employee reaction, classes should be held during the working day in groups of no more than 20. Further, he believes that dictators and transcribers should not be taught in the same class. His fee would be \$1,000 for the ten sessions.

From many sources you had heard about the letter-improvement program carried out by the Pacific Electric Company. When you interviewed Robert L. Jennings, head of the Customer Relations Department, he explained the plan as follows:

"We selected a correspondence instructor from one of the local universities to conduct a 2-hour class on Thursday afternoons. Lectures on principles of business writing, slanted toward the problems of our company, were supplemented by discussion of the carbon copies of the previous week's letters. Letters actually received from our customers were used as class problems.

"That was six years ago. By the end of the first year, the value of the course was evident. The improvement in dictation was marked. Complaints from customers were not nearly as numerous. A large file of complimentary letters from customers was accumulating.

"We are still holding those classes regularly, with one of our experienced employees in charge. The dictators know the principles, but only by regular inspection of carbon copies can it be assured that those principles are still being followed."

Submit this analysis in formal report form with recommendations.

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8. In charge of the Placement Bureau at Milligan University, Indianapolis, Burton Worley, director, decided to find out what personnel managers prefer in letters of application. So he asked you, director of the Research Bureau, if you would help him out. After joint consultation with the head of the Department of Business Writing, the head of the Vocational Guidance Department, and the head of Statistics, you prepared and sent the following questionnaire to 500 personnel managers in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. The replies of the 324 who returned the questionnaire are tabulated on this copy. From this material prepare a short analytical report for Mr. Worley which will help him when he talks to applicants. Prepare it so that he can just hand it to an applicant with the comment, "Here, read this; it'll help you prepare your application." Copies will also be available in school libraries. Submit the report with cover, title page, letter of transmittal which is also an epitome, table of contents, and the analysis itself.

1. a) Do you object to a duplicated letter of application?  
234 Yes                    90 No
- b) When considering several applicants for a position, do you eliminate those who send you a duplicated letter of application?  
143 Yes                    181 No
2. a) Do you object to a mimeographed data sheet?  
76 Yes                    248 No
- b) Do you object to a commercially printed data sheet?  
48 Yes                    276 No
- c) When considering several applicants for a position, do you eliminate those who send you either of the following:  
    Mimeographed data sheet            22 Yes            302 No  
    Commercially printed data sheet    17 Yes            307 No
3. Which of the following is more important to you in selecting an applicant?  
55 Application letter                37 Data Sheet  
232 Both equal in importance
4. Which of the following do you prefer?  
123 Applicant's letter addressed to you by name, followed by your title.  
85 Applicant's letter addressed to "Personnel Manager"  
116 No preference
5. What is your reaction to the following kinds of enclosures with the application?  
Return-addressed postal card  
29 Favorable    207 Unfavorable    88 Neutral  
Return-addressed stamped envelope  
214 Favorable    71 Unfavorable    39 Neutral

6. a) What is your reaction to an applicant's sending you a follow-up letter within a month after he has mailed you his application letter and data sheet?
- 252 Good      10 Annoying      62 Neutral
- b) If your answer to the above question is good, why do you favor a follow-up? (More than one reason allowed.)
- 73 Shows persistence  
178 Indicates interest  
220 Lets me know he is still available.
7. In selecting inexperienced employees, which of the following backgrounds do you prefer? Please rank on a 1-2-3-4 basis (highest rank = 1).
- a) Applicant who participated in many extracurricular activities and maintained a passing grade in his studies.  
(1) 37, (2) 74, (3) 114, (4) 99.
- b) Applicant who participated in several extracurricular activities and maintained above-average grades in his studies. (1) 102, (2) 124, (3) 79, (4) 19.
- c) Applicant who helped pay his own way through school and maintained above-average grades in his studies.  
(1) 164, (2) 106, (3) 36, (4) 18.
- d) Applicant who participated in no extracurricular activities and maintained honor grades in his studies. (1) 13, (2) 13, (3) 66, (4) 232.
8. When considering several applicants for a position, do you give preference to any of the following:
- 35 Local applicants are given preference  
107 In-state applicants are given preference over out-of-state applicants  
0 Out-of-state applicants are given preference  
182 Geographical location is immaterial
9. a) Do you want an applicant to mention beginning salary in his initial application?
- 187 Yes      137 No
- b) If your answer to the above question is yes, where should he mention salary?
- 97 Application letter      31 Data Sheet      96 Either
10. On many data sheets or application letters the applicant lists several specific references—usually under a caption labeled "References."
- a) When do you check these references?
- 187 Before the interview      120 After the interview  
17 Do not check
- b) Do you want this list of references included on the application?
- 260 Yes      16 No      48 Immaterial

- c) If your answer to the above question is yes,
- 1) How many references do you prefer? Please encircle your choice—  
(1) 0, (2) 16, (3) 193, (4) 72, (5) 43
  - 2) Where do you want these references?  
56 Application letter      137 Data Sheet  
131 No preference
  - 3) What types of references do you prefer? (check as many as you desire)  
314 Previous employers  
37 High-school teachers  
25 Dean of the college  
252 College instructors of related courses  
193 (Former) supervisors  
Other (please add) Character references (banker, doctor, minister, etc.) 41
11. Many college students have worked part time while attending school. Do you want to know about these jobs, whether they are related or not?  
298 Yes    26 No
12. Many college students have worked full time during summers. Do you want to know about these jobs, whether they are related or not?  
306 Yes    18 No
13. Which of the following do you prefer from an applicant?  
9 Application letter only  
86 Application letter and data sheet  
106 Application letter with placement office credentials forwarded separately  
123 Application letter and data sheet with placement office credentials forwarded separately
9. One of the projects you've inherited as director of educational research for the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business is that of college teacher recruitment and training. Your committee of co-operating university professors of business administration (at Alabama, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Kansas, Ohio State, Pennsylvania State, Texas, and Wisconsin) administered your questionnaire to 1,260 juniors, seniors, and graduates at the eleven institutions. Prior to that, you tested your tentative questionnaire on representative students at Wade State University, and revised the "free response" questions twice in an attempt to get accurate indications of students' attitudes toward college or university teaching as a career. Following are questions and tabulated answers which your research assistant has placed on your desk as a basis for writing a report intended for your readers—members of the AACSB, other college ad-

ministrators, professional associations (accounting, marketing, management), and foundations.

1. Have you ever talked with anyone about the advantages and disadvantages of a career as a collegiate teacher of business administration?

196 answered "yes."

2. What do you consider the advantages of collegiate teaching of business administration as a career?

	<i>Number of Times Mentioned</i>
Prestige .....	441
Opportunity to help others .....	412
Continual learning .....	252
Desirable associates .....	128
Research opportunities .....	125
Consulting opportunities .....	124
Stimulating intellectual environment .....	118
Pride in doing significant work .....	110
Freedom of thought .....	40
Short hours .....	240
Long vacations .....	226
Absence of pressure .....	138
Pleasant duties .....	129
Independence in carrying out duties .....	62
Regularity of income .....	156
Increasing demand for teachers .....	132
Stability of job .....	93

3. What do you consider the disadvantages of collegiate teaching of business administration as a career?

Pay is too low .....	879
Industry pays more .....	188
Inadequate retirement benefits .....	122
Ability and pay not correlated .....	52
Monotonous, dull duties .....	213
Restricted expression .....	48
Restricted personal life .....	39
Promotions too slow .....	157
Limited room at the top .....	131
Training period too long .....	128
Advanced-degree programs too difficult .....	118
Teachers become too theoretical/impractical .....	130
Teachers lose drive/originality .....	62
Teachers not appreciated by society .....	58

4. As a whole, would you favorably consider collegiate teaching of business administration as a career?

No    781              Don't know    303              Yes    176

5. Do you intend to teach business administration at collegiate levels?

No    1,058              Don't know    177              Yes    25

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6. Do you think you have enough information about college teachers' training, duties, responsibilities, and rewards (tangible and intangible) to answer questions 4 and 5 intelligently?

No 567

Yes 569

Plan the report for final distribution with a title page, letter of transmittal, contents page, and the analysis itself (introduction, survey findings and what they establish as well as imply, and a terminal section summarizing the most significant findings together with appropriate conclusions and recommendations).

### Longer, More Formal Analytical Reports

1. Subject to approval by your instructor, choose a topic for your long report. Preferably it should be a real problem actually faced by a company or individual; if not, it should be a problem likely to be faced by someone somewhere. It should be written for one or a very limited group of specific readers. A term-theme topic or something like a textbook chapter will not do because it is not a report. It should be an analytical report: the relevant facts plus interpretation and evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages (the pros and cons) of at least two alternatives and the eventual selection of one in your final conclusions and recommendations. In other words, it must be a problem which you help someone to solve.

It should be a topic for which you can get information in the library and through either interviews, questionnaires, or your own observation or experimentation.

The topic must be approved by your instructor. You cannot change topics after midterm for any reason.

As your instructor directs, be prepared to submit early in the course on one typed page (1) a one-sentence statement of the purpose of the report; (2) an indication of who the readers are and your relationship (actual or assumed) to them; (3) sources and/or methods of collecting data, including the titles of five items from your tentative bibliography; (4) major divisions (with subdivisions, if you like) of the coverage or body of the report.

Be prepared at any time to give your instructor a progress report in memo form, indicating what you have accomplished, what difficulties you've encountered, what remains to be done, and your plans for finishing.

At the time directed by your instructor, submit the report with appropriate cover, title page, letters of authorization and transmittal, contents listing, synopsis, body (including introduction, facts and interpretations, conclusions, recommendations), bibliography, and appendix if necessary.

2. Write the long report authorized in Memo Problem 21, p. 571. Supplement the published data with data acquired through letters and/or

interviews, as agreed upon by you and your instructor. Submit the report with cover, title page, memos of authorization and transmittal, contents, synopsis, and the analysis complete with recommendation(s).

3. One of the requests coming to your desk as director of Factseekers, Inc., New York, is from the president of (name of firm supplied by your instructor). The company is a chain of retail (type of store supplied by your instructor) stores with outlets in most major cities. The chain is now contemplating opening a store in either one of two cities (names of two cities supplied by your instructor).

You are asked to make a report evaluating the two as potential locations for this new store.

The letter to you as director, signed by the company president, reads:

Will you please submit in report form your analysis of retail-sales possibilities for (specific goods) in (specific cities)?

Before deciding where our next branch will be, we would like the opinion of a firm of your calibre.

Naturally, we want to know the story on population, buying power, retail sales—with special emphasis on (specific goods)—competition, and current business. But please include any other data which will be helpful to us in making our choice.

Please do not attempt to cover taxes, wage scales, real-estate costs, or availability of sites.

Since we plan to have the store in operation within a year's time, will you please confirm that you can submit the report no later than (specific date as assigned), subject to the same rates as on previous studies?

This request can readily be handled without sending representatives to either city; from secondary library sources you can get all the necessary comparative data: the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, *County Data Book*, *Market Guide of Editor and Publisher*, Rand McNally's *Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide*, *Sales Management's Survey of Buying Power*, Printers' Ink's special studies like *Sales Planning Guide* and *Major American Markets*, *Consumer Markets* published by the Standard Rate and Data Service. The foregoing are some of your more useful ones. But they are not intended to be an exhaustive list. You will, of course, want to consult the censuses of population, business, and manufacturers for (respectively) breakdowns of populations, influence of wholesaling and retailing on the local economy, and the value added to the economy by manufacturing. In all cases you will want the latest reliable data; recency of information is important.

Your entire analysis should be focused on the answer to the question: Which of the two towns is a better market for selling more of the specific merchandise this store sells? Population is, of course, a factor—

size as well as distribution and character of. The retail market area always needs examining. Income figures are significant (a person with \$4 is in a better position to buy than one with only \$2). Retail sales indicate whether people are willing to spend their money (total retail sales, per capita retail sales, and retail sales figures in the particular line you're investigating—if you can find them). Sources of business strength are appropriate considerations (a manufacturing town suffers more than a distribution center during a recession; a community depending primarily upon farming for its sustenance weathers economic storms more readily than one heavily dependent upon shipbuilding, for instance). And the current business picture (as measured by construction, postal figures, employment, and bank deposits) is always examined for its diagnostic value.

The list of topics above is merely to help you start thinking about what to include; it is not intended to be inclusive, orderly, or arbitrary. For instance, no study of this kind would ever omit competitive factors.

*This is assigned:* Exclude any discussion of banking facilities, communications facilities (newspapers, radio stations, advertising agencies), and transportation facilities. These are adequate in both cities and so would not affect the decision. But when you set out these limitations in the introductory section of the report, indicate in a footnote the sources where the reader can quickly and easily find the information if he wants to check it or tell him frankly that such data are not available if that is the case. Furthermore, the people would have done enough reading themselves to know where the cities are—and the pertinent geographical and climate features.

Although as an intelligent approach to the analysis you will want to do some background reading about the cities (in a good encyclopedia, possibly in a Chamber of Commerce release, and perhaps in the *Saturday Evening Post*, or George Sessions Perry's *Cities of America*), *you will not use these sources as documentation (evidence) in your report.*

Once you've made the final decision of what factors to include and—just as important—the order in which to lay them out, the analysis becomes a matter of simply comparing the two cities simultaneously to show which city is the better market—more people with more money to spend, and the apparent willingness to spend it . . . especially for this kind of merchandise.

DO NOT attempt to turn out a Chamber of Commerce root-for-the-home-team piece of propaganda. Impersonally, impartially present the facts about the two cities and make your decision on the total evidence. Devise some system of note-taking right from the start and take down complete references (author, article, publication date, volume of magazine, specific page references from which the data are taken, and total pages in the publication) every time you copy some data. Use 3 × 5 cards. Put separate facts on separate cards. Unless you do this job

carefully and completely, you will find repeat, last-minute trips to the library necessary.

An analytical report is not just a compilation of tables and labels. Your report must depend on the quotation of facts from other sources; these are incorporated primarily in the wealth of statistical display (graphics primarily, for readability). Without these—in abundance and completely identified with publication name, date, and page(s)—your report has no base and, in the reader's mind, no authenticity. But the most significant part of the report is your own expository (analytical) comment which explains the significance of the data you have gathered.

Of course, your report will be graded on physical appearance and mechanical correctness (freedom from errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar). It will be graded most heavily, however, on

1. Organization (the order of points for logic and emphasis)
2. Readability (stylistic factors)
3. Complete, authentic evidence and its reliability and documentation.

Submit the report with these parts in this order: cover, title page, authorization letter (you may copy the one given you and label it *COPY*), letter of transmittal, contents, synopsis, the analysis (introduction, the discussion of factors, and a terminal section), and a bibliography.

4. To avoid embarrassment to itself and to its graduates, the marketing department of one university requires all of its seniors to take Marketing 439, Research and Report Writing, and to get a passing grade from an English instructor on the written work for credit in the course. The requirement has been in effect two semesters, covering one section the first semester and two the second.

Assume that you are the English instructor and that the heads of both the Marketing and English departments want a report from you on the procedures and effectiveness of your plan during the second semester. You have read each report, made comments where they seemed appropriate, and held conferences with the students. During the second semester, you read seven papers from each student in Section 1 and held five conferences averaging fifteen minutes. In Section 2, you read three papers each and held two similar conferences with the students. Therefore, students in Section 1 received more than twice as much attention as those in Section 2. You hoped in this way to have a more objective measurement of the program—that is, by having a kind of modified control group.

Tables 1 and 2 contain information about each student's English background before taking Marketing 439. These tables show the percentile each student attained on the high-school placement test in English, percentile attained on an English mechanics test as a college

freshman, and grades earned in various English courses. The high-school placement test has been standard for some years and is taken by every high-school senior entering the university. Thus, percentiles indicated here are in relation to all high-school seniors of a given year. About 3,000 students take the mechanics test given each year to freshmen.

Tables 3 and 4 list statistical data obtained from objective English tests administered during the spring semester to students taking Marketing 439. The test was first administered in the opening week of the semester, in early February. The same test was administered again during the last week, in late May. Students did not know that they would again be given the same test, although they were told that they would again be tested in some manner. Test results are shown in three forms: raw score (out of a possible 90), percentile relative to a typical group of entering freshmen, and percentile relative to the Marketing seniors taking the test. The latter percentile was figured separately for the two testings so that a student's relative standing with his group could be more accurately measured. Differentials between first testing and second testing are also listed for each of the three categories.

Key for Tables 1 to 4:

NI—No information available

NT—Test not taken

A, B, C, D, E—Grade evaluations

X (in Tables 1 and 2, Columns 4, 5, and 6)—No courses taken in this area

(N)—Now taking course in this area

(P)—Plans to take course in this area

\*\*—(In Tables 1 and 2, Columns 4, 5, and 6)—Course taken at another school

1, 2, etc.—Number of courses taken in given area

+ (Table 1 only, Column 9)—substantial improvement in writing

\* ( " 1 " , " 9 )—some improvement in writing

- ( " 1 " , " 9 )—no noticeable improvement in writing

TABLE I  
Section 1

Name	High-School Placement Score Percentile	Freshman Mechanics Score Percentile	Freshman English Grade	Letter Writing Grade	Other Writing Courses	Other Lit. Courses	General English Evaluation on Mkt. Reports		Degree of Improvement on Mkt. Reports
							E	B	
Barnett .....	48	18	C:D	X	X	X	X	B	+
Cole .....	96	91	C:B	B	X	X	X	B	*
Cromer .....	71	88	C:C	B	X	1	1	B	-
Curtis .....	83	41	C:C	B	X	1	C	C	-
Frenkel .....	43	64	C:C**	X	X	X	D	D	*
Hall .....	N:T	45	B:B	X	X	X	C	C+	*
Johnson .....	38	45	C:C**	(N)	X	2	E	D	*
LeClaire .....	N:I	N:I	N:I	N:I	X	N:I	C	B	*
Liddle .....	85	N:I	B:B**	B	X	X	C	C	-
McCarry .....	86	52	C:C	X	X	X	C	C+	*
Nass .....	N:I	N:I	C:C**	B	X	1	E	C	+
Patton .....	94	91	B:A	(P)	X	2	C	C+	*
Pinkney .....	N:I	N:I	C:B**	B	X	X	C	C	-
Rehbaum .....	46	35	N:I	X	X	X	D	C+	+
Rich .....	92	66	C:C	B	X	X	C	C	-
Sanders .....	N:I	N:I	N:I	N:I	X	N:I	D	C	+
Sellers .....	44	N:I	C:C**	A	X	X	D	drop	-
Vision .....	N:I	N:I	C:C**	X	X	X	C	D	-
Wigle .....	85	72	C:D	C	X	X	C	C	*
TOTALS ...	70	59	C:+	B	D+ . C:-	7	0	C+	4+, 8*, 6--

TABLE 2  
Section 2

Name	High-School Placement	Score	Percentile	Freshman Mechanics Score	Freshman English Grade	Letter-Writing Grade	Other Writing Courses	Other Lit. Courses
Anderson .....		54	20	C-C	B**	X	X	X
Blackwell .....		53	14	C-C	X	X	X	NI
Durkee .....		59	00	NI	NI	X	X	NI
Hudson .....		83	23	C-C	(N)	X	X	X
Innes .....		98	55	C-B**	C	X	X	X
Klarmann .....		55	52	C-D	(N)	X	X	X
LaRusse .....		65	09	C-C	B	1	X	NI
McLeod .....		56	32	NI	NI	X	X	X
Maddox .....		68	67	C-D	(N)	X	X	2
Nabers .....		60	NT	C-C	B	X	X	X
Osborne .....		65	37	C-D	X	X	X	X
Pigman .....		56	NI	C-D	B	X	X	X
Pratt .....		NT	NI	C-C**	C	X	X	X
Reilly .....		92	57	NI	NI	X	X	X
Ritchey .....		56	40	CC	A	X	X	NI
Sanders, D. ....		59	12	NI	NI	X	X	NI
Sharkey .....		89	13	C-D	B	1	X	1
TOTALS ...		67	31	C	B	1	3	3

TABLE 3  
Section 1

Name	Test Results—Form A—February			Test Results—May			Changes from February to May		
	Raw Score	Percentile in Relation to Freshman	Percentile for Mkt. Students	Raw Score	Percentile in Relation to Freshman	Percentile for Mkt. Students	Raw Score	Differ. Differ.	Percentile (Freshman) (Marketing)
Barnett .....	54	70	56	65	93	76	+11	+23	+20
Cole .....	66	94	94	78	99	97	+12	+5	+3
Cromer .....	57	78	67	57	78	59	0	0	-8
Curtis .....	48	49	33	43	31	10	-5	-18	-23
Frenkel .....	35	08	00	53	67	45	+18	+59	+45
Hall .....	59	83	80	60	85	62	+1	+2	-18
Johnson .....	42	27	14	42	27	07	0	0	-7
LeClaire .....	52	64	50	51	60	31	-1	-4	-19
Liddle .....	61	87	86	56	76	55	-5	-11	-31
McCarthy .....	62	89	89	65	93	76	+3	+4	-13
Nass .....	47	45	28	53	67	45	+6	+22	+17
Patton .....	67	95	97	65	93	76	-2	-2	-21
Pinkney .....	56	76	64	52	64	38	-4	-12	-26
Rehbaum .....	38	15	08	52	64	38	+14	+49	+30
Rich .....	54	70	56	64	91	72	+10	+21	+16
Sanders .....	44	34	19	55	73	52	+11	+39	+33
Sellers .....	48	49	33	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Vision .....	57	78	67	48	49	21	-9	-29	-46
Wigle .....	57	78	67	69	96	90	+12	+18	+23
TOTALS .....	52.8	62.6	53.0	57.1	72.6	50.3	+ 4	9.2	-

TABLE 4  
Section 2

Name	Test Results—Form A—February			Test Results—May			Changes from February to May		
	Raw Score	Percentile in Relation to Freshman Students	Raw Score	Percentile in Relation to Freshman	Raw Score	Percentile for Mkt.	Raw Score	Percentile for Freshman	Differential (Marketing)
Anderson .....	53	67	53	51	60	31	-2	-7	-22
Blackwell .....	46	41	25	43	31	10	-3	-10	-15
Durkee .....	55	73	61	50	57	28	-5	-16	-33
Hudson .....	45	37	22	55	73	52	+10	+36	+30
Innes .....	52	64	50	58	81	59	+6	+17	+9
Klarmann .....	65	93	91	60	85	62	-5	-8	-29
LaRusse .....	52	64	50	69	96	90	+17	+32	+40
McLeod .....	50	57	39	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Maddox .....	58	81	78	49	53	24	-9	-28	-54
Nabers .....	57	78	67	62	89	69	+5	+11	+2
Osborne .....	40	21	11	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Pigman .....	59	83	80	65	93	76	+6	+10	-4
Pratt .....	37	13	6	39	18	00	+9	+5	-6
Reilly .....	51	60	42	NI**	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
Ritchey .....	42	27	14	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Sanders, D. ....	47	45	28	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Sharkey .....	35	08	00	39	18	00	+4	+10	0
TOTALS .....	49.4	53.6	42.2	53.3	62.8	41.8	+2.9	+4.3	-

## **APPENDICES**



# Appendix A. Keyed Symbols for Significant Points about Business Writing

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THIS alphabetical list of short, easy-to-remember symbols is intended as a time-saving way for a teacher to mark papers and for a student to find brief explanations of the most significant points and common errors in business writing.

The alphabetized symbols are easy for the student to find and easy for the grader to remember. They are nearly all abbreviations of already familiar grading terms. Even the few abstract, unalphabetized symbols at the end are mostly standard proofreader's marks.

Use of a symbol plus the number of the pertinent subdivision will, of course, help a student find the explanation of his particular error; but a teacher may prefer to use only the symbol and thus induce the student to review the whole topic.

Page references at the ends of some entries tell where the user can find fuller discussion and (in most cases) illustrations of those points.

Selection of the points is based on years of experience in observing the good and the unacceptable in the writing of college students. By concentrating on the most frequent trouble makers instead of giving an unnecessary systematic and complete coverage of grammar and usage, we hope to avoid wasting your time and trying your patience.

The explanations of points of grammar and usage are based solidly on the studies of linguists—the true authorities on those points.

We have used two or more symbols for some corrections because some teachers will be more accustomed to one of them and some to another.

The frequent cross-referencing is to save space and duplication; but where repetition takes little space, we feel that it is preferable to the lost time in following through on a cross-reference.

**A, an** Use *a* if the following word begins with a consonant sound (including the now-pronounced *h* in *hotel* and *historical*)—and combined

consonant and vowel sounds, as in *European*, *usage*, *unit*, and *eulogy*); use *an* if the next word begins with a vowel sound, including words beginning with silent *h* (*hour*, *honor*, *honest*).

- Ab** Abbreviation. Before abbreviating, make sure that it would be appropriate, that the reader would understand, and that you know the right form (including the capitalization, spacing, and punctuation). Ordinarily dates and states are not abbreviated. Mr., Mrs., Dr., A.M., P.M., C.O.D., F.O.B., and E.O.M. are commonly abbreviated in business writing. Chemical symbols, certain engineering terms, and certain footnote references are preferably abbreviated if you are writing to a reader who will understand. Check your dictionary if in doubt about an abbreviation.
- Ac** Accuracy. Get facts, names, addresses, and statements right. Mis-spelling a reader's name is a strike against you. If your statement does not say what it means, or may possibly be interpreted to mean something else, restate it so that it has only one clear meaning.
- Adap** Adapt better to your reader's interests, reading ability, and experience. A message that seems to be written for somebody else, or for nobody in particular, will be less effective than one which seems to fit the reader. See p. 109.
- Agr** Agreement of subjects with their verbs and of pronouns with their antecedents is essential to clear, inconspicuous writing.
1. Guard particularly lest words between the subject and verb cause you to forget the number of your subject. Notice that the first sentence about agreement is an illustration: *agreement* (singular) is the subject of the verb *is*; but between them is a prepositional phrase with four plurals. As other illustrations, consider
    - Selection of topics *is* based on the reader's knowledge and interests.
    - Government programs help make more food available to the consumer but *cost* a great deal of money.
    - Lee also tells how important the arrangement of the records offices *is*.
  - Part, series, type, and other words usually followed by plural phrases are frequently pitfalls to the unwary writer:
    - The greatest part of his investments *is* in real estate.
    - A series of bank loans *has* enabled the firm to stay in business.
  2. Any, anyone, each, every, everyone, everybody, either, and neither all point to singular verbs (and pronouns), except when the choice next to the verb in an either-or situation is plural:
    - Any of the men in this group *is* expected to give some of *his* time to helping the group when asked.
    - Either board members or the president *has* power to act on the point.

- Neither the mayor nor the council members *are* allowed to use city-owned automobiles.
3. Two separate singular subjects combined by *and* require a plural verb; but when combined by *besides*, *together with*, or *as well as*, they take a singular:
- The honorary president and leader of this group *is* Mr. Anderson.
  - Mr. Weeks and his secretary *do* the work in the central office.
  - Considerable knowledge, as well as care, *is* necessary in good writing.
4. Be sure your pronouns agree in number and gender with their antecedents (words they stand for). The two biggest dangers are (1) in forgetting the number of the antecedent when many words intervene before the pronoun and (2) in deciding on the number when referring to collective nouns or pronouns.
- The benefits a student gets from studying the practical psychology, writing skills, and ways of business in a good course in letter writing will help *him* throughout *his* life.
  - The company plans to move *its* main operations closer to *its* major source of raw materials.
  - The faculty *are* allowed almost complete freedom in the conduct of *their* classes while the administration plays *its* part by providing the facilities, general policy, and record keeping.
5. Relative clauses beginning with *who*, *that*, or *which* require verbs agreeing with the antecedents:
- The manager *is* one of those persons who expect unquestioning loyalty.
6. Plural-sounding collective subjects take singular verbs when the action is that of the group but plural verbs when the action is that of various individuals:
- The board *is* having a long meeting.
  - The board *have* been arguing and disagreeing on that point for months.
  - Twenty-five dollars *is* a reasonable price in view of. . . .
- Avoid using a collective as both singular and plural:
- The company *is* located in Chicago, but *its* (not *their*) products are sold all over the country.
7. Beware of letting the complement tempt you to make the verb agree with it:
- Our main difficulty *was* errors in billing.
  - The biggest cost item *is* employees' salaries and wages.

**Amb** Ambiguous—more than one possible meaning and hence not clear. Usually the temporary confusion can be cleared up by (1) correcting a faulty pronoun reference (see **Ref**) or by (2) rewording to straighten out a modifier so that it can modify only what you intend (see **Mod**).

- He took over the management of the business from his father when he was 55. (When his father reached 55, Carl took over management of the business.)
- We agreed when we signed the papers that you would pay \$100. (When we signed the papers, we agreed that you would pay \$100 or We agreed that you would pay \$100 when we signed the papers.)

**And** *And* is a strong co-ordinating conjunction—one of the most useful and most troublesome of words.

1. It should be used only to connect (in the sense of addition) things of similar quality and grammatical form. Used otherwise, it produces faulty co-ordination between an independent and a dependent clause, misparallelism, or sentence disunity. See **Sub**, **Para**, and **Unit**.

—The plans call for a new four-story building, and which will cost \$4,500,000. (Omit *and*; it can't connect an independent and a dependent clause.) See **Coh**.

—In this course you learn the ways of the business world, the principles of practical psychology, and to write better. (The infinitive *to write* is not parallel with the nouns *ways* and *principles*. Make them all the same form before connecting them by *and*.) See **Para**.

—We feel sure that the saw will serve you well, and we appreciate your order. (The two ideas are not closely enough related to appear in the same sentence—probably not even in the same paragraph.) See **Unit**.

2. *And* is properly the most-used connective, but don't overuse it to connect a series of independent clauses into a long, stringy sentence. If the clauses deserve equal emphasis, they can be made separate sentences. If not, the weaker ones should be **Subordinated**.

—The consultant first talked with the executives about their letter-writing problems *and* then he took a sample of 1,000 carbon copies *and* he classified them into two groups *and* 45 per cent of them were for situations that could just as well have been handled by forms. (After talking with the executives about their letter-writing problems, the consultant classified a sample of 1,000 carbon copies from the files. He found that 45 per cent of them were for situations that could just as well. . . .)

3. *And* may be used as a sentence beginning only if you want to emphasize it.

4. *And* is not proper before *etc.*; the *et (et cetera)* means *and*.

5. *And* may be used with *or* (and/or), except in formal writing, to mean either one or both of two possibilities.

**Ap** The appearance of a letter, as of a person, should be pleasant but unobtrusive and should suggest that the writer is competent, accurate, neat, and alert. To do so, it must be on a good grade of

paper, properly spaced, and typed with a reasonably fresh ribbon and clean type without messy erasures or glaring errors. Check Chapter I.

**Apos** Apostrophes should be used in

1. Possessives (except *its* and the personal pronouns): before *s* in singulars (*man's*); after the *s* in plurals if the *s* was added to make the word plural (*ladies'* but *women's*);
2. Contractions: to mark the omission of a letter (*isn't*, *doesn't*, *it's*—meaning "it is," quite different from the possessive *its*);
3. Plurals of symbols: figures (illegible *8's*), letters of the alphabet (one *o* and two *m's*), and words written about as words (too many *and's* and *but's*).

**Appr** Appropriateness to the situation is an important test of good English. Is your statement too slangy, colloquial, or formal for the occasion? See **Adap**, and p. 72 for a discussion of levels of usage.

**Assign** Follow the facts and directions in the assignment. Though you are expected to fill in with necessary details of your own invention, you are not to go contrary to the facts or the spirit of the problem, and you are to make only reasonable assumptions.

**Au** Authorization letter. See the reports check list, p. 557.

**Awk** Awkwardness in expression calls attention to itself; and it may confuse a reader. Reconstruct your sentence or change word order for a natural flow.

**C** Courtesy could be improved here. See p. 88.

**Cap** Capitalization is pretty well standardized except that newspapers set their own practices and hence are not guides for other writing.

1. Capitalize the names of specific things, including titles of people, but not general words. For instance you capitalize the name of any specific college, university, or department; but you write "A university education may well cost \$6,000, regardless of the department in which one studies." You write "L. W. Wilson, President of the University of . . . , " or "When President Wilson came. . . ." You capitalize any specific course, room, lake, river, building, . . . , but not the general words. So you might write that you are taking Economics 215, majoring in engineering, but right now going to a history class in the Liberal Arts Building, after stopping in to see a professor in Room 115. Next summer you may fish mostly in Portage Lake and some in the Ausable River, though you prefer river to lake fishing. Of course you capitalize English, French, German—all the languages, because they derive from the names of countries.
2. In titles of books and articles, capitalize the first word and all others except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions—unless you use solid capitals.
3. Capitalize the seasons (spring, summer) only when they are personified (rare except in poetry).

4. Capitalize sections of the country (the South, the East Coast) but not directions (east, west).
5. Capitalize official titles and terms of family relationship when used in place of the name: "Yes, Son, . . . , " "The Senator then went . . . , " "After Mother had seen . . . ."
6. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it starts a complete sentence. (In an itemized listing, you may capitalize the first word of items even though they are incomplete sentences.)

**Card** Cardinal numbers (one, two, three; 6, 7, 9) are preferable to ordinals (first, second, third; 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, or 2nd, 3rd) in dates except in very formal invitations and legal documents, or when the day is separated from the month. As a general rule, use the form that would be pronounced if read aloud. Since the simple ordinal forms may be either adjectives or adverbs, they need no -ly endings, ever.

—On October 7 . . . ; sometime in November—probably about the 7th.

**Case** Case is no particular problem with English nouns. One form serves for all cases except the possessive (genitive), and the only real problem there is remembering correct use of the Apostrophe. For pronouns:

1. Use the nominative case (*I, we, he, she, they, who*) for the subject of a verb (other than an infinitive) and for the complement of a linking verb (any form of *to be*).
2. Use the objective case (*me, us, him, her, them, whom*) as the object of a verb or preposition and as the subject of an infinitive. In informal speaking and writing, however, *who* is often used (and acceptable) as the object of a preposition unless it immediately follows the preposition: *Who* was the letter addressed to?
3. Use possessive case to show possession and to serve as the subject of a gerund (a verb form ending in -ing and used as a noun: "*His* accusing me of dishonesty . . . .")

**CB** Comma blunders—also called comma faults—are serious errors. See **SOS**.

**CF** Comma faults—also called comma blunders—are serious errors. See **SOS**.

**Chop** Choppy, jerky, short sentences are slow and awkward. Usually the trouble is (1) incoherence (the sentences don't follow each other naturally—see **Coh**), (2) poor control of emphasis (all the ideas in independent clauses, though of different importance—see **Sub**), or (3) lack of variety (all the sentences of the same pattern, usually all beginning with the subject or nearly the same length—see **Var**). Try combining several of the sentences, subordinating the less important ideas, and stressing the important ones in the independent clause.

**Cl** Clearness is a fundamental of good writing. Make sure your reader can get your meaning quickly and easily. Usually a statement that

is not immediately clear requires fuller explanation, more exact wording, or recasting of a faulty or involved construction. See **Ac.**

**Coh** Coherence—that quality of writing which shows the reader the relationships of the ideas—is essential to clear, quick, and easy reading. It comes best from a logical sequence of ideas expressed with heavy emphasis on the important ones and less on the related but less important ones, and with any necessary conjunctions to show what relationships exist. The worst kind of incoherence comes from putting apparently unrelated ideas together in the same sentence or paragraph. Be especially careful not to connect unrelated thoughts, or ideas of different importance, with *and*.

1. Plan what you want to say so that your ideas fall in a natural sequence. Sometimes a topic sentence can help hold together several otherwise seemingly unrelated ideas. For example, if you begin with “Three factors deserve special consideration,” the three following sentences or paragraphs all seem related in being tied to the topic statement.
2. Be sure your ideas have the proper relative emphasis. (See **Emp** and **Sub.**) Ideas deserving emphasis should be in independent clauses (groups of words that can stand as whole sentences). If two or more of these ideas are closely related and deserve equal emphasis, they can be put together in one sentence (compound). Ideas deserving less emphasis should be put in dependent clauses. (Since a dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence, it has to be attached to the independent clause most closely related in thought—making a complex sentence.)
3. Check carefully to see whether you need transitional words or phrases to help the natural sequence and sentence type show the proper relationship of your ideas. If so, see **Tr** and consider these words and others of somewhat similar meaning to select the one which fits your purpose best:

and . . . moreover, besides, in addition, also, furthermore  
 but . . . however, nevertheless, yet, still, although, while  
 either-or . . . neither-nor, else, whether  
 therefore . . . consequently, hence, as a result, accordingly, so, ergo  
 because . . . since, as, for, the reason is  
 then . . . after that, afterward, later, subsequently  
 meanwhile . . . during, simultaneously, concurrently, while  
 before . . . preceding, previously, prior to  
 if . . . provided, assuming, in case, unless

**Conc** Conciseness (which is not necessarily brevity) depends on leaving out the irrelevant, leaving unsaid what you can adequately **Imply**, and cutting out deadwood. See pp. 57–61 for explanation and illustration of techniques.

**Conf** Confidence in yourself, in your decisions, and in your success in obtaining the action you request will go a long way toward getting acceptance of your proposals; but you need to avoid overconfidence or presumptuousness. In an application letter, for example, the writer who is too meek or modest hurts his chances; but so does

the fellow who is too cocky or aggressive. In phrasing the decision to refuse an adjustment, a writer needs to explain adequately and then assume that his decision will be acceptable. In making recommendations, usually the writer is not justified in commanding; but he needs to word them with as much confidence as the facts and the reader-writer relationship will allow. In the endings of Plan-C letters, the request for action should be stated with success-consciousness (p. 114), but not with presumption. Words like *if*, *hope*, and *trust* indicate doubt—a lack of confidence.

—*If you want to buy an X, just . . . .* (After your sales presentation, assume that he does and tell him how: “Just fill out the handy order form and mail it today and you can have your X within . . . .”)

—*We trust this arrangement will be satisfactory.* (Too much doubt. If you’ve explained adequately, assume acceptability of your decision.)

—*When may I have an interview?* (Presumptuous. The question seems to leave no alternative as to whether, the only question being when. Better: “Please tell me a time when I may come to talk with you more fully about . . . .”)

**Conn** Conjunctions connect ideas to show the kind of relationship that exists.

1. Unless the relationship is already clear, put in the necessary conjunction.
2. Be sure that the one you use reflects accurately the relationship you intend. (See the list under **Coh** for groups of somewhat similar connectives with different shades of meaning.)
3. Guard particularly against using *but* when no contrast is intended, and against using either *it* or *and* to connect things unless they are the same grammatical structure (noun with noun, verb with verb, etc.).
4. Before using *therefore*, *because*, or any of the other similar words, make sure that a true cause-and-effect relationship really exists.

**Conn** Connotations—the overtones or related meanings of words—are often as important as the denotations, or dictionary meanings. Be sure that the words you use are appropriate in connotations as well as in denotations. Consider, for example, the connotations in the following pairs: cheap-inexpensive, secondhand-used, Complaint Department—Customer-service Department, basement store-thrift store.

**Cop** Copying from the assignment or from other people produces writing that doesn’t sound like you. Put your ideas in your own words.

**Cpr** Comparisons require special attention to these points:

1. The things compared must be comparable. Usually the trouble is omission of necessary phrases like “that of,” “that on,” “other,” or “else.”

- The mark-up on Schick shavers is higher than *that on* Remingtons. (You can't omit "that on" or you'll be comparing the height of a Remington—measured in inches—with the markup on Schicks—a percentage.)
  - Frank Mosteller sells more Fuller brushes than any *other* salesman. (Without "other," the statement is illogical if Frank is a salesman; he can't sell more than he himself sells.)
2. Incomplete comparisons mean nothing; complete them.
    - You get more miles per dollar with xxx. (More than with what?)
    - This material has a higher percentage of wool. (Higher than what?)
  3. Be sure to use the correct form of comparison words. Comparisons involving two things are usually shown by adding *-er* (the comparative) to the simple form (*later*, *colder*, *slower*). Those involving more than two usually require the *-est* (or superlative) form (*latest*, *coldest*, *slowest*). For words of three syllables or more—and for many with two and some with only one—the better form is *more* plus the simple form (for the comparative) or *most* plus the simple form (for the superlative): "more frequently," "most hopeful." Some words may be used either way: oftener or more often; oftenest or most often. Attention to the sound of the expression is usually a sufficient guide to native speakers of English. When in doubt, see the dictionary.
  4. Watch these idioms: Complete the "as much as" phrase and use *to* after *compare* when pointing out similarities only, *with* when pointing out any differences:
    - Price increases may be worth as much *as*, if not more than, the dividends on a common-stock purchase.
    - Comparison of x to y shows that they involve the same principles.
    - Comparison of sales letters with application letters shows that they are quite similar but that they have minor differences.
  5. Certain words (*unique*, *empty*, *final*, for example) are logically absolutes and hence cannot take either comparative or superlative forms.
- CSP** Select a central selling point and give it the major emphasis by position and full development. Scattering your shots over too many points leaves the major ones weak. See **Emp** and **Dev**.
- Date** Dates should be written in the standard form (November 2, 1963) unless you have good reason to do otherwise. Your most likely good reasons could be (1) you are in the armed services, where the form 2 November 1963 is used, or (2) you're writing a formal notice, where everything is spelled out, or (3) you're writing an informal note and may well use the form 11/2/63. Modern business writing usually does not abbreviate months and does not use the ordinal forms. See **Card**.

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- Dead** Deadwood phrases add nothing to the meaning but take writing and reading time because they go the long way around to say anything. For conciseness, omit them. See **Conc** and the list of frequent deadwood expressions, pp. 57 ff.
- D** Diction. Use a more suitable word. The big test, of course, is whether the word conveys your thought accurately, including its connotations. Consider whether your words will be understood easily; whether they give a sharp, vivid picture by being natural and fresh instead of pompous, jargonistic, or trite; whether they give a specific, concrete meaning instead of a fuzzy or dull concept because they are general or abstract; and whether they are appropriately informal, formal, standard, technical, or nontechnical—according to the topic and reader. Watch especially the following often-confused pairs: accept-except, adapt-adopt, affect-effect, almost-most, amount-number, already-all ready, all right—"alright" (no such word), altogether-all together, are-our, beside-besides, between-among, capital-capitol, fewer-less, formerly-formally, imply-infer, it's-its, loose-loose, moral-morale, oral-verbal, personal-personnel, principal-principle, than-then, there-their, too-to-two.
- Dev** Develop your point more thoroughly with more explanation, specific details, or examples to make it clearer, more interesting, more convincing, or more emphatic. See **Spec**.
- Dir** Directness saves words, speeds up reading, and makes your ideas clearer. Don't waste words by beginning too far back in the background of the subject, by stating what the reader already knows, or by expressing what will be clearly implied if you begin with the key thought. Write direct, active-voice sentences beginning with the important word as the subject. The Expletives "It is . . ." and "There are . . ." are indirect, passive, and wordy.
- Dng** Dangling modifier. See **Mod**.
- Doc** Documentation—telling your sources—is necessary when you use the ideas of others. See pp. 468–72 for discussion and illustration. Also see the reports check list, p. 553.
- Emp** Emphasis should be divided among your ideas according to their relative importance.
1. When you state important ideas, give them deserved emphasis by one or more of the following methods: putting them in the emphatic beginning or ending position of your letter or paragraph, putting them in independent clauses, developing them thoroughly, and perhaps underscoring them or writing them in solid capitals (or a different color). See p. 57 for fuller explanation.
  2. When you have negative, unimportant, already known, or other ideas that don't deserve emphasis, avoid overemphasizing them. Some useful methods are putting them in unemphatic middle positions, putting them in dependent clauses or phrases, and

giving them brief mention or just implying them. Particularly objectionable is overemphasis on things the reader obviously knows and on things that are (or can be) adequately implied. The first insults the reader's intelligence, and both waste words:

- Spring is just around the corner. You'll be needing. . . .  
(With spring just around the corner, you'll. . . .)
- On October 3 you asked me to write a report on. . . . I have finished it and am. . . . (Here is the report your letter of October 3 asked me to write on. . . .)
- I have your letter of April 20 in which you ask for quotations on x. I am glad to give you our prices. Our present prices on x are. . . . (Just omit the first two sentences. They're implied in the third.)

**Etc.** Etc., an abbreviation of Latin *et cetera*, meaning "and so forth," should not be used unless the reader will have a good idea of how to fill out the incomplete list (as in "Please take even-numbered seats 2, 4, 6, etc."). Otherwise it can mean only "Reader, you guess what else I mean to include," and that does not communicate. Because *etc.* is an abbreviation, it takes a period; but because it is anglicized, it need not be italicized (or underscored in typed copy). In no case should you write "and etc.;" *et* means and.

**Exp** Expletives (*it is, there are*) nearly always make your writing unnecessarily wordy, weak, and passive. They usually result from a misguided attempt to write an impersonal style. In general, you should avoid them, though sometimes they may help to soften a command or avoid presumptuousness in a recommendation:

- It was thought that you would prefer. . . . (I thought you would. . . .)
- There are four important factors involved. These are: . . . .  
(The four important factors are. . . .)
- It will be necessary to have your. . . . ("You must send . . ." might be too commanding.)

**Fast** Fast movement that gets to the point quickly—without cumbersome detail or explicit statement of ideas that should be implied—is desirable when your message will be accepted readily; but if you need to persuade the reader either to accept an unpleasant decision or to take a reluctant action, you have to build up your case adequately before stating the key point. Stating the bad news before adequate justifying reasons, or requesting an action before showing enough reader benefits to motivate that action, is therefore marked **Fast**, meaning "You got here too fast."

**Fig** Figures are better than words (except at the beginning of a sentence) for serial, telephone, page, chapter, chart, catalogue, and street numbers; for money, dimensions, and dates and time (except in formal announcements); for all quantities when several are close together (but not adjoining) in a sentence or paragraph; and for other isolated quantities above 10. (As an acceptable replace-

ment for the Rule of 10 for isolated quantities, your teacher may authorize this: Use words if the quantity takes no more than two.)

1. If a quantity comes at the first of a sentence, write it in words or recast the sentence.
2. When a sentence involves two different series of quantities, use figures for one and words for the other; if more than two, use a table.
  - On the qualifying exam, ten per cent of the applicants scored 90–100, thirty per cent 80–89, . . . .
  - Please make six 2" × 3" black-and-white prints and three 5" × 7".
3. The old longhand practice of stating quantities twice—in one form followed parenthetically by the other form—is unnecessary and undesirable in type or print, though it is still sometimes used in legal documents.
4. Except in dates, street numbers, and serial numbers, use a comma between groups of three digits, counting from the right.
5. Except in tables involving some cents, periods and zeros after money quantities are wasted typing and reading.
6. Two-word quantities between 20 and 100 require the hyphen (twenty-six).
7. Cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), are preferable to ordinals (1st, 2d, 3d, 4th) in dates except when the day is separated from the month. See **Card and Date**.
8. Since ordinals are either adjectives or adverbs, an *-ly* ending is never necessary.

**Gobb** Gobbledygook is big-wordy, round-about, long-winded, or stuffed-shirt language. Characteristically it shows two or more of those traits and comes in long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid it like poison; it works against both clarity and ease of reading.

**Gr** Graphic devices of various kinds can often supplement words to make the information clearer, easier, or more interesting. Use them where they will help, but only if they will; make them big enough and detailed enough (but no bigger or more detailed than necessary) for your purpose; and be sure you use the most appropriate kind (line, bar, or pie chart; drawing, map, photograph, for example). See the reports check list, p. 536.

**Gw** Good will, the third basic requirement of a business letter, is lacking or poorly handled here. See Chapter III.

**I** Introduction. See the reports check list, p. 542.

**Id** Idiomatic usage—the natural, customary, accepted way of saying certain things—is correct that way simply because that is the way we say it, though it may defy grammatical analysis and rules. Idioms are so numerous and varied that they cannot be fully explained here. Usually, however, an error in idiom is use of the wrong preposition. Consider possibility *of*, possible *to*, necessity *of*, need *for*, and ability *to*. See **Prep**.

- Imp** Imply rather than express the idea, to save words or avoid over-emphasis. See **Emp** and pp. 57–59.
- Ital** Italic print, indicated by underscoring in typewritten and handwritten copy, is used to emphasize occasional words; to mark the title of a book or journal; to mark a word, letter, or figure used as an illustration or typographical unit (instead of for its meaning); and to indicate an unanglicized foreign-language expression used in English context.
- Underscoring is *preferably not* used for titles of *parts*, such as the title of an article in a journal or a chapter in a book. Quotation marks are preferable for that purpose. (Underscoring for emphasis here.)
  - Chapter 2, “The Second Test of a Good Letter,” in *Writing Business Letters*, stresses clear, natural style and general linguistic *savoir-faire*.
  - Convenience* and *questionnaire* are often misspelled.
  - Use of fewer *I's* and more *you's* would improve many letters.
- Item** Itemize complex series and lists to emphasize the points, to avoid complex punctuation problems, and to force yourself to state your points more precisely and more concisely.
- Jar** Jargon is fuzzy or inappropriate writing attributable to one or more of pomposness, circumlocution, deadwood, abstractness, big words, technical terms (written to nontechnical readers), and hackneyed expressions. It is the opposite of simple, natural, clear writing. Avoid it.
- Jux** Juxtapose (put side by side) facts and ideas that the reader needs to consider together. For instance, wholesale and retail prices need to be seen together (with the difference and percentage of markup figured) if they are to mean as much as they should to the retailer being asked to stock the product.
- K** Awkwardness in expression calls attention to itself; and it may confuse the reader. Reconstruct your sentence or change word order for a more natural flow.
- lc** Lower case needed here, instead of Capital.
- Log** Logic. Avoid statements which will not stand the test of logic or for which the logic is not readily clear. Perhaps you need to write in a missing step in the logic. Maybe you need to state your idea more precisely. Or maybe you need to complete a comparison to make it logical. (If the last, see **Cpr** for fuller explanation.)
- M** Mechanics. See the reports check list, p. 558.
- Mod** Modifiers should be placed in the sentence where they fit most naturally and make the meaning clearest. To avoid awkwardness and write clearly, you have to make sure that each modifier relates clearly to the thing it is supposed to modify. As a general rule, the two should be as close together as natural sentence construction will allow.

1. Participles (usually phrases including a verb form ending in *-ing* or *-ed*, and usually at the beginning of a sentence) require careful attention lest you relate them to the wrong word (or nothing at all).
  - Smelling of liquor, I arrested the driver. (The officer did not intend to say that he himself had been drinking.)
  - After soaking in the prepared mixture over night, I set the specimen up to dry for two days. (The scientist didn't mean what he said.) Those errors are commonly called "misrelated modifiers" or "dangling participles." Infinitives can dangle the same way:
  - To enjoy the longest, most dependable service, the motor must be tuned up about every 100 hours of operation. (The motor cannot enjoy dependable service.)
  - In order to assist you in collecting for damages it will be necessary to fill out a company blank. (The two infinitives dangle because they are not related to any doers of the actions indicated.)
2. *Only*, *almost*, and *nearly* are tricky words. Watch where you put them. Consider the varied meanings from placing *only* at different spots in "I can approve payment of a \$30 adjustment."
3. A so-called "split" infinitive (putting a modifier between *to* and a verb) is usually undesirable because it is usually awkward; but if it is clear and natural, you'll do better to go ahead and split the infinitive rather than write an awkward sentence trying to avoid doing so.
4. Be sure to use the correct form of modifier. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns; adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Most adverbs end in *-ly*; but some don't. See **WF**.

**Mon** Monotonous. See **Var.**

**Nat** Natural writing avoids triteness, awkwardness, and pomposity. Clichés, trite and hackneyed expressions, and jargon suggest that a writer is not thinking about his subject and his reader; awkwardness suggests carelessness; and big-wordiness and pomposity suggest that the writer is trying to make an impression. He probably will—in the wrong way. Really big men think through what they want to say and put it simply, smoothly, and naturally. Though you cannot write exactly as you talk, you should try to write with the same freedom, ease, simplicity, and smoothness of your talk. See p. 63.

**Neg** Negative in letter writing is defined as anything unpleasant to your reader. Since you want his good will, you should avoid the negative when you can, and subordinate it when you can't avoid it. Insofar as possible, stress the positive by telling what you have done, can do, will do, or want done instead of their negative opposites. See p. 112; and for methods of subordinating, see p. 57, **Emp**, and **Sub**.

**O** Organization. See p. 459 and the reports check list, p. 529.

- Obj** Objectivity. Use of emotional or feverish words (especially if extensive) suggests a prejudiced rather than an objective view of the situation and therefore causes the reader to lose faith in the writer—especially a report writer. See pp. 463 and 472.
- Obv** Obvious statements—when they are unnecessary as bases for other statements—at least waste words; and when they are put in independent clauses, they show poor control of emphasis and may insult the reader's intelligence. When you need to state an obvious fact as the basis for something else, put it in a dependent clause and use the independent clause for the new idea. (See **Emp** and **Sub.**)  
—New York is America's biggest city. Therefore. . . . (Since New York is America's biggest city, . . . .)
- Om** Omission of a word or necessary idea. Make your statements both grammatically and logically complete. See **Tele**, **Log**, and **Cpr**.  
1. Conciseness is certainly a desirable quality in letters and reports, but it should not go so far as to push you into telegraphic style—omission of subjects, connective words, and articles:  
—Please send check \$123 for shipment April 1.  
2. Unless the same verb form or preposition applies appropriately in a double construction, use the necessary two:  
—His interest *in* and hard work *on* accounting have. . . .  
—He should have *sold* earlier, and perhaps will now *sell*, since the market trend is clearer.  
—The product *is* new and the prospective buyers *are* numerous.
- Out** Outlining. See p. 459 and the reports check list topic "Organization," p. 529.
- P** Punctuation which follows the conventions of written English (and is therefore understood by most readers) is a helpful device for both reader and writer in communicating clearly, quickly, and easily. But when it goes contrary to the understood conventions, it does not help and may even confuse. You should not try to use even good punctuation, however, as a crutch for bad writing. Heavy punctuation cannot make a bad sentence into a good one; so the need for it suggests revising the sentence rather than trying to punctuate the involved statement. The best style is so direct and simple that it requires little punctuation except periods at the ends of sentences. Still you cannot write much without need for some internal punctuation. Here are the conventions most commonly violated:  
P1. Use a comma between two independent clauses connected by *and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor* if no other commas are in the sentence; but be sure you are connecting two clauses rather than a compound subject or verb.  
—You may buy the regular Whiz mixer at \$18.75, but I think you would find the Super Whiz much more satisfactory. (Two clauses.)

—We make two grades of Whiz mixers and sell both at prices lower than those of our competitors' products. (Compound verb; one subject.)

- P2. Use a semicolon between two independent clauses unless connected by *and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor*; and, even then, use a semicolon if there are other commas in the sentence (as in this one). Typical weaker connectives requiring the semicolon between two independent clauses are *therefore*, *so*, *moreover*, *hence*, *still*, *accordingly*, *nevertheless*, *furthermore*, *consequently*, and *however*. When these words are used as simple connectors not between two independent clauses, however (as right here), they are set off by a pair of commas unless they fit so smoothly into the sentence that they require no marks.

—Jets made airline maintenance men relearn their jobs; the jet manual is twice as thick as the old one for prop planes. (No connective.)

—The preceding sentence could be made into two, of course; but, because the ideas are closely related, it is better as one. (Commas elsewhere require semicolon before even a strong conjunction.)

—Good letter writing requires proper punctuation; therefore you must know how to use the semicolon. (Weak connective.)

—The proper style for letters is simpler and less involved than that for most other writing, however, and therefore does not require very complex punctuation procedures. (*However* is a simple transition, *not used* between two clauses here and *not close-knit* into the phrasing the way *therefore* is; so it is set off by commas while *therefore* goes unmarked. Note, too, that the weak connective *so* requires the semicolon because it connects two clauses.)

- P3. Use a comma after all dependent clauses, long phrases, or other phrases containing any form of a verb at the beginning of a sentence; but when these forms appear elsewhere in a sentence, use commas only with nonrestrictive (nonessential) ones. (Nonrestrictive statements add descriptive detail and are not necessary to the logic or grammatical completeness of the sentence; restrictive ones define, limit, or identify and are necessary to convey the intended meaning.)

—Because the dependent clause comes at the beginning, we have to use a comma in this sentence.

—We do not need a comma in a complex sentence if the dependent part comes at the end or in the middle and restricts the meaning the way this one does.

—Having illustrated the two points about dependent clauses at the beginning and restrictive clauses elsewhere in the sentence, we now use this sentence to illustrate the use of a comma after a long phrase at the first of a sentence. (Because it includes a verb form, it would require a

comma even if it were short, like "Having illustrated, we now leave the topic.")

—The three points already illustrated, which are certainly important, are no more important than the point about using commas to set off nonrestrictive clauses anywhere, which this sentence illustrates. (In fact, it illustrates twice: Both the *which* clauses could be omitted; they are nonrestrictive because they merely give added information unnecessary to either the meaning or grammar of the basic sentence.)

**P4.** Be sure to put in both commas—or dashes or parentheses—around a parenthetical expression in the middle of a structure. Direct addresses ("Yes, Mr. Thomas, you may . . .") and appositives (restatements like this one that follow immediately to explain a term) are typical examples. But, like clauses, some appositives are restrictive or so closely related that they require no punctuation while others are nonrestrictive or so loosely related that they do.

—His starting point that good punctuation is a matter of following the conventions has not been stressed enough.

—His second point, the importance of writing letters so smoothly and naturally that they require little internal punctuation, would preclude most punctuation problems.

—General Motors opened a new plant in Akron, Ohio, in November, 1955, to produce certain auto parts.

**P5.** Use commas to separate co-ordinate adjectives. As two tests for co-ordinacy, see if you can put *and* between the adjectives or invert their order without producing awkwardness. If so, they are co-ordinate and require a comma.

—Proper punctuation can help greatly in writing a clear, easy-to-read style.

—Fairly heavy white paper is best for letterheads.

**P6.** The comma is the usual punctuation between items in a series (preferably including one before the *and* with the last item, because it is sometimes necessary for clearness and is always correct). But if any item except the last has a comma within it, use semicolons at all points between items.

—Make your writing clear, quick, and easy to read.

—Use commas between independent clauses connected by *and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor*; semicolons between independent clauses with other connectives or no connecting words; commas for dependent clauses and verbal or long phrases at the beginnings of sentences, for nonrestrictive ones elsewhere, and for simple series; and semicolons for complex series like the one in this sentence.

**P7.** Dashes, commas, and parentheses are all used in pairs around parenthetical expressions that interrupt the main part of the sentence. The choice depends on the desired emphasis and

on the other punctuation. Two dashes (called "bridge dashes") emphasize most, commas less, and parentheses least of all. If the parenthetical part contains internal parentheses, dashes have to be used around it; if it contains commas, dashes or parentheses have to be used around it. (Of course only a pair of parentheses can be used around a whole sentence which gives explanations, relatively unimportant additional detail, or side information not germane to the trend of the discussion, as this sentence does. In that case, the period comes inside the closing parenthesis, though it comes outside otherwise.) A single dash—made on the typewriter preferably by two hyphens without spacing before, between, or after but also by one hyphen with spacing before and after—may be used to mark an abrupt change in the trend of a sentence or to precede an added statement summarizing, contrasting, or explaining the first part. In this second function, it is commonly called the "pick-up dash."

- Your main weaknesses in writing—misspelling, faulty punctuation, and incoherence—should be corrected before you write letters.
- Errors in spelling, punctuation, or coherence—these all mar an otherwise good letter.
- A letter writer must avoid the common errors in writing—misspelling, bad punctuation, and incoherence. (Of course the colon could replace the dash here; but ordinarily it should not unless the preceding statement is a formal introduction, usually indicated by the word *following*, or unless it is an introduction to an itemized list.)

**P8. Hyphenate two or more words used to make a compound adjective modifying a following noun or pronoun.**

- fast-selling product, wrinkle-resistant material, long-wearing soles, never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Note that the point usually does not apply when the adjectives follow the nouns.

- The material is highly wrinkle resistant and long wearing.

Certainly it does not apply when the adjectives modify the noun separately.

- These slacks are made of a hard, durable material.

Nor should the compound-adjective principle be applied to various other compounds: *extracurricular*, *classroom*, and *textbook*, for example. For such words, unless you know for sure, the only safe guide is the dictionary.

The compound-adjective principle does apply, however, to double compounds made with one element in common, where the "suspension hyphen" follows the first: three- and five-pound cans; only light- and middle-weight boxers.

The hyphen also marks the break in a word at the end of a line. See *Syl.*

Other less-frequent uses of the hyphen include (1) spelling of fractions (*three-fourths*) and two-word quantities between 20 and 100, and (2) prefixing words or syllables to names (*post-Hitler Germany*), to other words beginning with the same vowel as the end of the prefix (*re-entry, pre-established*), or to any word that might then be confusing (*re-collect, not recollect; re-cover, not recover*).

- P9. Quotation marks are used primarily for short, exact quotations of other people's words and for titles of *parts* of publications, such as magazine and newspaper stories or book chapters. (The titles of journals and books should be italicized—underlined in typed copy—or written in solid capitals. See **Ital** and **Cap.**) If a quotation is more than two or three lines long, you should indent it from each side, single-space it, and leave off quotation marks. You should not use quotation marks around a paraphrasing, but only for exact quotation. Usually you should avoid using expressions so slangy as to require quotation marks; if an expression is inappropriate without the quotes, you'd better find a different word. When closing quotation marks and other marks seem to come at the same place, the standard *American* practice is as follows: Place commas or periods *inside* the closing quotes; place semicolons or colons *outside*; and place question or exclamation marks inside or outside depending on whether they are part of the quotation.
- P10. The colon is either an anticipating or a separating mark. As an anticipator, it is used after introductory lead-ins to explanations or quotations, especially if the lead-in includes such formalizing terms as the word *following* or if the explanation is itemized or lengthy.

- The X Company's ink was even redder: its third-quarter loss of. . . .
- Three main benefits deserve your attention: . . . . (Enumeration follows.)
- On the use of the colon, Perrin says: . . . . (Long quotation follows.)

Because the colon is also a separating mark, however—used to separate hours from minutes and volume numbers from pages, for example—it should not be used as an anticipating mark when the lead-in phrasing fits well as an integral part of a short, informal statement. Summey calls this the “obtrusive colon.”

- The three main advantages are (colon would be obtrusive here) speed, economy, and convenience.
- Perrin reports that (no colon; not even a comma) “*Will* has practically replaced *shall* in. . . .”

Almost invariably words like *namely*, *that is*, *for example*, and *as follows* are wasted (and browbeating) when used with a colon. The introductory phrasing and the colon adequately anticipate without those words.

—We had several reasons for changing: namely the. . . .  
(Omit *namely*.)

—We had several reasons for changing. These reasons are: . . . . (This is worse. Omit *these reasons are*; put the colon after *changing*.)

Though practice varies, usually you should capitalize the first word after a colon only if it begins a complete sentence; but if itemizations follow, you may capitalize even though each item depends on the introductory statement for completeness.

The same idea applies to the end punctuation of items following a colon. If the items make complete sentences, put a period after each; but if all are to be considered one sentence, use comma or semicolon at the end of each (except the last, of course) as in other series—or you may use no end punctuation.

**P11.** Underlining in typed or handwritten copy calls for italic type when printed. Its main uses are to mark titles of books and journals, to emphasize, and to indicate unanglicized words. In copy not to be printed, it should be used also for any heading not written in solid capitals. Otherwise the heading, which is really a title for the copy over which it stands, does not stand out sufficiently. (A printer would make it stand out by using big or bold-face type.)

Type underlining is preferably continuous, rather than broken by individual words, because it is easier both to type and to read that way.

**P12.** Besides its well-known use at the end of a question, the question mark may be used in parentheses immediately following a statement or spelling about which the writer is uncertain and unable to determine. Obviously, it should not be used as an excuse for laziness; but if you have only heard a difficult name, for example, and have to write to that person, you'd better use the mark than unconcernedly misspell the name.

A question mark should not be used after indirect questions or commands softened by question form.

—We need to know what your decision is. (Indirect question).

—Will you please ask the girl in your office to change my mailing address. (Softened command.)

**Par** Paragraphs in letters and reports are the same as in other writing—unified developments of topics—except that they tend to be more compressed and shorter for easier readability. (The symbol ¶ may be used to replace **Par**.)

1. Keep your paragraphs reasonably short. Long ones are discouragingly hard to read. Especially the first and last paragraphs of letters should be short (rarely more than three or four lines). Elsewhere, if a paragraph runs to more than about eight lines, you should consider breaking it up for easier readability. Usually you can find a good place. Certainly you should ignore any idea that a paragraph has to be more than one sentence. Often one sentence can say all that you need to say on a topic.
2. But develop your paragraphs adequately to clarify and support your points—by explanation, detail, facts and figures, or illustrations and examples. See **Dev.**
3. Make each paragraph coherent by taking out elements irrelevant to the topic and by showing the interrelationship of the ideas. Consider these means: (a) using the same key word or a synonym for it, (b) using a connecting word or phrase such as those listed under **Coh**, (c) beginning with a topic sentence or ending with a summary.
4. Show the relation of the paragraph to the preceding (by following logical sequence, carrying over key ideas, and/or using transitional words) and to the purpose of the whole paper or section (by pointing out the significance and/or by using transitional words or sentences).
  - Paragraph unity also includes. . . . (*Also* means some of the explanation has preceded.)
  - Carrying over key words and using transitional words are both means of providing unity between paragraphs as well as within them. (*As well as* means we've discussed unity *in* paragraphs and now will discuss it *between* them.)
5. **Par** with **No** before it means “No new paragraph needed here because you are still on the same topic and within reasonable paragraph length.”

**Para** Parallelism means using the same kind of grammatical structure for ideas that are used co-ordinately, as in pairs, series (including lists), comparisons, and outlines. Those structures state or imply relationships usually indicated by *and*, *but*, or *or* and hence should relate only full sentences to full sentences, nouns to nouns, verbs to verbs, active voice to active voice, plural to plural—indeed *any* grammatical form only to the same grammatical form in the related part. Watch for parallelism with *not only . . . but also*, *as well as*, *larger*, *less expensive*, and the like. (See p. 462, Item 7, for parallelism in outlines.)

- One of the duties of the airline hostess is to offer customers magazines, pillows, and hang their coats. (Two plural nouns and a verb improperly connected by the co-ordinating conjunction *and*.)
- The No-Skid knee guard is long wearing, washable, and stays in position. (Two adjectives connected by *and* to a verb.)

- John Coleman is 39, married, and a native. (Two adjectives and a noun.)
- If we fair each side of the arc, we produce a more practical airfoil section and an increase in performance is attained. (Active voice related to passive. Rewrite the last part as "increase the performance.")
- The next step is baking or catalyzation ("baking or catalyzing").
- Swimming is better exercise than to walk. (A gerund compared with an infinitive.)

Parallelism in pairs, series, and comparisons is largely a question of logic; you can add together and compare only like things. See **Log.**

**Pas** Passive voice (in which the subject receives rather than does the action indicated by the verb) is usually wordy, awkward, and weak. Most of your sentences should therefore use the active voice. It makes important words (usually persons or products in letters) the subjects and objects of your verbs, as they should be. Writers often use passive constructions trying to avoid *I* and *We* as the subject. If you feel that you must avoid them to prevent the monotony of sentence pattern, you should see p. 65 instead of resorting to the passive. If you feel that you must avoid them to increase objectivity, you are working under a false impression; you can be just as biased without them. (See **Obj.**) But you can avoid the first person and the passive at the same time, as explained in the first illustration below. Still you may find appropriate use for passives to meet a thesis director's or company executive's requirement that you write impersonally, to avoid a direct accusation, to put emphasis on something other than the doer of the action, or to weaken an otherwise rankling command or recommendation.

- Your Long-Flight skis were shipped this morning by our mailing department. (Can be made active and impersonal as "Two Long-Flight skis are on their way; they left the mailing department this morning.")
- The subject has been considered from the following viewpoints: . . . . (The requirement of impersonal style may justify the passive here.)
- The mower apparently has not been oiled adequately. (Avoids accusing the user.)
- The Wembley has been in great demand among the buying public for years. (The passive puts emphasis on the product rather than on the people demanding it.)
- Careful attention should be given to . . . . (Weakens a possibly rankling command.)
- It is recommended that . . . . (Weakens and avoids egotism in a recommendation.)

**PD** Psychological description (interpreting facts and physical features of a product in terms of reader benefits) is the real heart of selling. Unless your reader readily makes the interpretation himself, pure

physical description is ineffective in selling. So when you name a physical feature of a product you're selling, show the reader what it means in terms of benefits to him. (See pp. 255-56.)

—The Bostonian Sporty shoe has Neolite soles and triple-stitched welt construction. (The Neolite soles and triple-stitched welt construction cause the Bostonian Sporty to last long and keep your feet dry.)

- Per** Personalized messages written for and adapted to specific readers are more effective than mass broadcasts. What seems to be for everybody has less interest to anybody. Even form letters should be worded to give each reader the feeling that the message is directed to him. Expressions such as "Those of you who . . ." and "If you are one who . . ." give just the opposite impression. (See p. 110.)
- Plan** Plan your letter more appropriately for the circumstances as an A, B, or C plan. (See p. 101.)
- Pr** Follow more generally acceptable business practice.
- PR** Personal references (names of people or pronouns referring to them) not only help to keep the reader in the picture and produce the you-attitude (YA); they help to avoid the passive voice (Pas), to make your writing specific and concrete instead of general and abstract (Spec), and to make your writing easier and more interesting to read. Naming or referring to persons is an important element in readability.
- Prep** Prepositions indicate relationships within a sentence.
  1. Be sure to use the right one for your construction. Some words require certain prepositions; others vary prepositions for different meanings:
    - ability *to*; agree *to*, *with*, or *in*; compare *to* (for similarities only) or *with* (for likenesses and differences); different *from*. See **Id.**
  2. When you use two words that require different prepositions, use both:
    - Because of your interest *in* and aptitude *for*. . . .
  3. Don't use many of the .45-caliber group prepositions (*according to*, *in regard to*, *by means of*, *in connection with*, *on the part of*) for squirrel-size ideas or your prepositions will "bulk too large," as Perrin says.
- PV** Insofar as possible, keep the same point of view in a sentence, paragraph, or a whole letter. Make only logically necessary shifts, and let your reader know by providing the necessary transitional words. Watch carefully for shifts in time, location, and those whose eyes you seem to be looking through. For effective you-attitude, look through the reader's eyes whenever possible. See **YA**.
- R** Bring your reader into the picture early and don't forget him later. He is the most important person involved with your letter. See **Per, PR, PV**, and **YA**.

- Ref** Reference of pronouns. Except for the few indefinite pronouns (*one, everybody, anybody*, and *it* referring to the weather), a pronoun confuses or distracts a reader unless it refers clearly to a preceding noun or pronoun and agrees with it in number and gender. *Each, every, any*, and their combinations *anybody* and *everybody*, are considered singulars requiring singular verbs and pronouns, but see **Agr** for further explanation of agreement.
1. Often the trouble with a pronoun reference is that the antecedent is just too far away. Repeat the antecedent or change the word order.
  2. Guard particularly against *this, that, which, it*, and *they* making vague reference to ideas of whole preceding clauses instead of clear, one-word antecedents.
  3. Of the relative pronouns, *who* usually refers only to persons, *that* to persons or things, and *which* to things, including animals and collections of persons such as boards and committees.
  4. *That* usually introduces restrictive clauses (not requiring commas) and *which* usually introduces nonrestrictive ones (requiring commas).
- Rep** Repetition of words or ideas seems wordy and monotonous unless it serves a justifying purpose. Restatement of important ideas deserving emphasis is often desirable; but even then the restatement usually should be in somewhat different words to avoid monotony.
- Res** Resale material—reassuring a customer that his choice of goods and/or firm was a good one—not only shows your service attitude (**SA**); it helps keep incomplete orders and delayed shipments on the books, rebuilds reader confidence when used in adjustments, and serves as a basic idea in collections. Look it up in the Index and read about it in connection with the particular type of letter involved.
- S** Style. See Chapter II and the reports check list, p. 548.
- SA** A service attitude—showing a genuine desire to give the reader the kinds and quality of goods and services he wants, favorable prices, and various conveniences, plus unselfish reassurance of appreciation for his business—can go a long way toward overcoming any feelings he may have that you are indifferent. Your basic techniques are to interweave into your letters some sales-promotion material (**SPM**) and resale talk (**Res**). See p. 95.
- SC** Show more success consciousness.
- Self** Selfish interest is assumed by both reader and writer, but it does not help your cause and therefore is best not mentioned. Your reader is more interested in his own benefit and will be persuaded only if you show him what's in the situation for him. See **YA** and p. 106.
- Sim** Simplify. Needlessly big words or involved sentences are hard to read.
- Sin** Sincerity is essential if you are to be believed. Don't pretend or overstate your case. See p. 92.

- Slow** Slow movement is desirable in a B-plan letter where you must reason calmly with the reader to justify the unpleasant point you are preparing to present (see **Fast**); otherwise it is objectionable.
1. Don't use too many words before getting to an important point.  
Starting too far back in the background, giving too many details, or saying things that should be implied are the most frequent faults.
  2. Don't use too many short, choppy sentences and thus slow up a message that should move fast.
- SOS** Serious errors in sentence organization and structure justify the distress signal.
1. Don't present a phrase or dependent clause as a sentence. Usually correction requires only attaching the dependent element to the preceding or following sentence (on which it depends).
    - In answer to your request concerning what the company is like, what has been accomplished, and the future prospects. Here is the information I have been able to acquire. (Replace the period with a comma.)
  2. Don't use a comma, or no punctuation at all, between two independent clauses unless a strong conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor*) is there. The error is not basically one of punctuation (as discussed in **P1** and **P2**) but the more serious failure to recognize what a sentence is. You need a period if the two statements are not so closely related that they ought to be in the same sentence, or a semicolon if they are.
    - The credit business is big business some people estimate that it is as much as 86% of American business. (Period needed before *some*.)
    - Running two sentences together without punctuation is about the worst error a writer can make, however it is little worse than using a comma where a semicolon is required, as in this sentence. See **P2**.
  3. Don't put words together in such unnatural, confusing relationships that the reader has to ponder to get the intended meaning. (See **K** and **Mod.**)
    - Just because you want to sell I don't want right now to buy. (The fact that you want to sell is insufficient reason for me to buy right now.)
  4. Don't put ideas together with connectives that falsely represent their relationship. See **Coh**, **Conj**, and **Unit**.
- Sp** Spelling error. Here are some tips on spelling and a list of words frequently misspelled in business writing.
1. ie or ei: When pronounced like ee, write ie except after c or in either, neither, leisure, seize, and weird. When pronounced otherwise, write ei (as in freight, height, forfeit) except in die, lie, pie, tie, vie, and science.
  2. Double a final single consonant preceded by a single vowel (a, e, i, o, u) in an accented syllable when you add a suffix (ing, ed, er) beginning with a vowel (plan, planning; shop, shopping). Note

that if the word already ends in two consonants, or one preceded by two vowels, you do not double the last consonant (holding, helping; daubing, seeded). Note, too, that the consonant usually is not doubled unless in an accented syllable (benefit, benefited; refer, referred, references).

3. Drop a final, unpronounced e preceded by a consonant when you add a suffix beginning with a vowel (hope, hoping; owe, owing); but retain the e after c or g unless the suffix begins with i or e (noticeable, changeable, changing, reduced).
4. Change final y to i and add es for the plural if a consonant precedes the y (ally, allies; tally, tallies); otherwise just add s (valley, valleys).
5. Add 's for the possessive of all singulars and of plurals which do not end in s; add only apostrophe for s-ending plurals (man's, men's; lady's, ladies'; Davis's, Davises').
6. Hyphenate double-word quantities between twenty and a hundred (twenty-one, thirty-two, forty-four, ninety-eight).
7. Get somebody to pronounce for you while you try to spell the following words commonly misspelled in business. Then study those you miss (along with others which give you trouble, from whatever source) until you are sure of them.

accidentally	disastrous	noticeable	questionnaire
accommodate	effect (result)	occasionally	realize
accurate	embarrass	occurrence	receive
achievement	environment	offered	recommend
acquaintance	equipped	omitted	referring
acquire	exaggerate	original	repetition
affect (influence)	excellence	paid	sense
all right	existence	passed (past)	separate
among	experience	perform	stationary
analyze	explanation	personal	stationery
apparent	forty	personnel	succeed
argument	government	possession	surprise
attorneys	grammar	practical	than (then)
beginning	guarantee	precede	their (there)
believe	height	preferred	thorough
benefited	imagine	prejudiced	ties
category	immediately	prepare	too (to, two)
choose (chose)	incidentally	principal	undoubtedly
comparative	interest	principle	unnecessary
conscientious	interpret	privilege	until
conscious	it's (its)	probably	using (useful)
consensus	laboratory	proceed	varies
consistent	led	procedure	whether (weather)
convenience	lose (loose)	prominent	writing (written)
decision	moral (morale)	psychology	
definitely	mortgage	pursue	
description	necessary	quantity	

- Spec** Specific wording, like sharpness of a photograph, helps the reader get a clear idea; general words give only a hazy view.
1. If you are inclined to use the general word for a class of things, consider the advantages of giving the specific kind in that class

(machine—mower; office equipment—files, desks, chairs, and typewriters; employees—salesmen, janitors, secretaries, and others).

2. Another kind of specificness is given supporting details, illustrations, examples, and full explanations for general statements made. If you use generalities to gain conciseness in topic and summarizing statements, be sure to follow them up with necessary supporting explanations or further details; otherwise your unsupported statements will not be accepted.
3. Still another important kind of specificness is giving the evidences of abstract qualities you may be inclined to use. If you are inclined to say that something is a bargain, outstanding offer, highest quality, revolutionary, best, ideal, or economical, give the concrete evidences for these qualities instead of the abstract words. In an application letter, if you want to convey the ideas that you are intelligent, industrious, honest, dependable, and sociable, give the evidences and let the reader draw his conclusions; you will sound too cocky if you apply those words to yourself, and your reader will not believe them anyway, unless you give the supporting concrete facts.

**SPM** Sales-promotional material (when appropriate and unselfish) not only shows a service attitude (see SA) and produces some additional sales; it helps to take the sting out of early collection letters and provides a pleasant ending for essentially bad-news letters, provided that the situation is not too seriously negative. See p. 98.

**Sub** Subordinate. Don't overstress negative ideas, facts known to the reader, or insignificant points. If you must say them, put them in the middle of the paragraph or letter, devote little space to them, and/or put them in dependent clauses or phrases. Since dependent clauses are particularly useful in subordinating, here are some of the main words that make clauses dependent: after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, till, unless, until, when, where, while.

**Subj** Subjective mood is complex; but nearly all the problems with it in business writing can be solved if you remember these statements: (1) *Were* is the form for present tense, regardless of person (first, second, or third); *be* is the auxiliary form (to be used with present and past participles). (2) Use the subjunctive for conditions contrary to fact (including unachieved wishes) and after commands.

—If he *were* better trained in. . . . (Present tense, third person, contrary to fact.)

—The manager directs that these topics *be discussed* thoroughly. . . . (Past participle with *be*; follows command.)

**Sw** Shall-will; should-would. General usage differs so much from formal usage of *shall* and *will* that formal practice sounds unnecessarily stiff in most letters and reports. In general usage (which is usually appropriate for business writing), *will* has almost com-

pletely replaced *shall*, though formal usage still calls for *shall* with the first person and *will* with other persons to indicate the simple future, and for the reverse to indicate firm promise or determination.

More important for business writers is the distinction between the simple futures and their conditional forms, *should* and *would*. Using the simple future sometimes seems presumptuous.

—I will (or shall, if you want to be formal about it) appreciate your giving me your answer by November 20 so that. . . .

(*Would*, in place of *will*, removes the presumption that the reader will answer, by using the conditional mood and saying, in effect, “*If you will answer . . . I will appreciate it.*”)

- Sy** Synopsis. See the reports check list, p. 556.
- Syl** Divide words at the ends of lines only at syllable breaks, and then only if each part has at least two letters and is pronounceable. If in doubt about where to divide a word, check the dictionary.
- T** Terminal section (of a report). See the reports check list, p. 554.
- Tab** Tabulate or itemize when you have lots of figures to present or a series of distinct points to make. Itemization will make you think more sharply and state your ideas more precisely and concisely. Thus you produce clearer, quicker reading and more emphasis.
- Tele** Telegraphic style (omitting subjects, connective words, and articles, as in telegrams and newspaper headlines) is not acceptable practice in letters and reports.
- Ten** Watch the tense (time indicated by your verbs) for appropriateness in the individual verb and logic in the sequence of verbs. Normally you use the present, past, or future according to the time of the action you are reporting; but use the present for statements that are true regardless of time. (See the reports check list, p. 552, Item 12, for tense in reports.)  
—The law of supply and demand *means*. . . .  
—The 1929 edition *says*. . . .
- Tone** Tone is questionable here. Watch out for a tone of indifference, undue humility, flattery, condescension, preachiness, bragging, anger, accusation, unflattering implications, sarcasm, curtness, effusiveness, and exaggeration. See p. 83.  
Since salutations and complimentary closes are the first and last indications of your feelings about the formality of your relationship to your reader, be sure they represent those feelings accurately. See Chapter I.
- TL** Transmittal letter. See the reports check list, p. 557.
- Tr** Transitions between sentences in a paragraph and between paragraphs must show the relationship. Your best method is use of a thread of logic that will hold your thoughts together like beads on a string. When the logical thread does not make the relationship clear, however, you need to do so by repeating a key word or idea

from the preceding, or by using a connecting word or phrase that shows the relationship. See **Coh** and **Unit**.

**Tri** Trite expressions (a form of **Jargon**) are usually overused and hence worn-out figures of speech that dull your writing. The remedy is to state your idea simply in natural, normal English or to use an original figure of speech.

**Unit** Unity (of sentences, paragraphs, or whole pieces of writing) requires that you show how each statement fits in or belongs (is not irrelevant). Applied to a sentence or paragraph, it means that the statement seems irrelevant or that the several ideas are not closely enough related to be in the one sentence or paragraph. When applied to a whole letter or report, it means that the content seems so varied as to lack a central theme and should be put in two or more separate papers. Often, however, the writer sees relationships that justify putting things together as he has, and his fault is in not showing the reader the relationships—an error of **Coherence**.

—Please put your answers in ink and have your signature witnessed by two people. One of our envelopes is enclosed for your convenience. (The envelope is not a convenience in doing what is requested in the first sentence. The two unrelated ideas should not be in the same paragraph. Adding “in returning your answers” would help.)

**Usa** Usage refers to the appropriateness of the language to the situation. A passage or expression marked with the symbol may be too formal and stiff, literary, flashy, or highbrow; or too slangy, familiar, crude, or lowbrow. The normal, natural English of educated people conducting their everyday affairs is neither formal nor illiterate, but informal and natural. That's what you should use for most letters and reports.

**Var** Variety (of diction and of sentence pattern, type, and length) is necessary to avoid monotony, which puts readers to sleep. Achieving variety should be a part of the revision process, however, and should not distract your thoughts from saying what you want to say in writing a first draft. In your revision, see that you haven't begun too many successive sentences the same way (especially not with *I* or *we*). If you have repeated yourself, cut out the repetition unless you need it for emphasis; and then change the wording if the two statements of the same idea are close together.

The usual English sentence pattern is subject-verb-complement; in revision, vary the pattern to avoid a dull sameness. (Page 65 lists various kinds of sentence beginnings.)

Good style also requires variety in sentence type. Some of your sentences should be simple (one independent clause); some should be compound (two independent clauses stating two closely related ideas of nearly equal importance); and some should be complex (at least one independent clause and one or more dependent, all expressing related ideas but of unequal importance). Especially to be avoided are too many successive simple sentences for ideas not

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deserving equal emphasis or too many compound sentences connected by *and*. (See **Sub.**)

Though most of your sentences should be relatively short (averaging 12–20 words for easy readability), you will produce a monotonous choppiness if all your sentences are in that range. See **Sim** and **Chop**, and revise accordingly.

**WF** Word form. As you know, many words change forms slightly according to their use in the sentence. Be sure you use the right form for the purpose.

1. Verbs change according to what we call their principal parts. Here are some of the troublesome or unusual ones.

<i>Present Tense</i>	<i>Past Tense</i>	<i>Present Participle</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
I begin	I began	beginning	have or had begun
blow	blew	blowing	blown
choose	chose	choosing	chosen
forget	forgot	forgetting	forgot
lay	laid	laying	laid
lead	led	leading	led
lend	lent	lending	lent
lie (recline)	lay	lying	lain
pay	paid	paying	paid
prove	proved	proving	proved
set	set	setting	set
sit	sat	sitting	sat
throw	threw	throwing	thrown
wear	wore	wearing	worn
write	wrote	writing	written

2. Adjective and adverb forms are sometimes confused. Determine whether the word modifies a noun or pronoun (for the adjective form) or a verb, adjective, or adverb (for the adverb form). Most, but not all, adverbs end in *-ly*.
3. Not only must pronouns agree with the words they refer to (see **Ref**), but they must be in the proper form (case) for their use in the sentence. Most of the troubles are cleared up in this one sentence: Use the nominative case (*I, we, he, she, they, who*) as the subject of a verb or the complement after any form of the verb *to be*; use the objective case (*me, us, him, her, them, whom*) as the object (receiving rather than doing the action) of an active-voice verb or the object of a preposition. Be especially careful to make the second of a compound object of a preposition in the objective case:

—He said that the story was a big secret, but he told it to Betty and me.

In informal writing and speaking, you may go contrary to the general rule and use *who* at the beginning of a sentence (because that is “subject territory”) even though it is really the object of a verb or preposition.

—Who would you consider the better authority on a point like this, a linguist like Fries or somebody else?

—Who did you tell? Who did you buy that for?

4. Be on guard against any of the following illiterate forms (mostly

the results of bad pronunciation): "He is prejudice" (prejudiced), "He is bias" (biased), "usta" or "use to" (used to), "had of" (had), "would of" (would have), "most all" (almost all), "a savings of" (a saving of).

5. Use comparative forms (former, latter, better, more, faster, and the like) only when referring to two things; use the superlative form (best, most, fastest) only when referring to three or more. See **Cpr.**
6. Distinguish between the often-confused pairs: may be—maybe, some time—sometime, all ready—already, with regards to—in regard to, its—it's, your—you're. See **D.**

**YA** You-attitude. The you-attitude is certainly one of the three most important points about letter writing. (The other two might be good will and clear style.) People do things for their own benefit, not yours. If you want to persuade them to act, then you have to show them the advantages to themselves. Both your reader and you know that you're interested in yourself. Trying to deny that fact would be insincere and disbelieved. But you need not put your selfish interests in the letter; the fact that you want something is no reason for the reader to act. The benefits he gets are. Show them to him. See **Self** and p. 106.

To show the reader what is in the situation for him, you have to visualize his way of life and show how your proposal fits in. See **Adap.**

Though using more *you's* than *I's* or *we's* may help, it is no assurance that your letter has the you-attitude.

**X** Obvious error. Proofread carefully and correct such errors.

**~** Invert the order or sequence of words or ideas.

**○** Close up the unnecessary space.

**¶** New paragraph needed.

1. Paragraphs in letters and reports are the same as in other writing—unified developments of topics—except that they tend to be more compressed and shorter for easier readability. Especially the first and last paragraphs of letters should be short (rarely more than three or four lines). Elsewhere, if a paragraph runs to more than about eight lines, you should consider breaking it up for easier readability.
2. Develop your paragraphs adequately to support your points—by further explanation, detail, facts and figures, or illustrations and examples.
3. But avoid putting unrelated things in the same paragraph. See pp. 67–69 for tips on paragraph construction.

**#** Additional space needed here.

**⊖ or ↖** Delete (take out); unnecessary.

**↔** Move in the direction pointed.

# **Appendix B. Summary Suggestions in Check-List Form to Help You Write Letters You'll Write Frequently**

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## **Direct Inquiry Check List**

1. Get this letter under way quickly.
  - a) A subject line frequently saves your reader's time by establishing:
    - (1) The fact that this is an inquiry,
    - (2) The nature of the inquiry (the name of the product, service, or person, as the case may be).
  - b) Your major question should be in the first line of the letter.
  - c) Make the question(s) specific (not just "some information" but "What colors . . .").
  - d) For fast traveling in your opening, imply what you can; if you cannot establish an idea by implication, consider referring to it subordinate.

Slow, plodding:

Will you please give us some information about Travis Brannon? He reports that he was once your assistant. We are considering his application for the position of college traveler.

Fast-moving:

What would be your reaction if Travis Brannon, your former assistant, walked into your office trying to sell you on McGraw-Hill textbooks?

  - e) When you use a subject line, don't depend on it for coherence in the letter or as the antecedent for any pronoun.
  2. Cover at least the basic questions to which you want answers.
    - a) Analyze the problem and make the minimum number of questions to get the necessary information.
    - b) Arrange questions in the most appropriate order: importance, logic, time, or space sequence.
    - c) Provide explanations the reader needs in order to answer.
  3. Be careful about the form and wording of the questions.
    - a) Ask directly for information; don't hint. "I should like to know if the Lektrasweep has a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -horsepower motor" is wordy and slow. "Does the . . ." accomplishes the same job better and cheaper.

### **Direct Inquiry Check List (Continued)**

- b) Word your questions to get the information you want—that is, not a mere “Yes” or “No” when you need explanation for a true picture. Leading questions (phrased to suggest a certain answer) won’t get you the information you want, either.
  - c) If you want to run a series of questions, tabulate them; solid paragraphs of questions induce mental dizziness.
  - d) When you need to interweave questions and explanations, be especially careful to vary sentence form and length to avoid a sing-song effect.
4. Express gratitude cordially in first person, future tense: “I shall be grateful (or appreciate)” eliminates the awkwardness and wordiness of “It will be appreciated if . . .” and the presumptuousness of “Thank you in advance.” If appropriate, offer to reciprocate.
  5. Any time you can refer confidently and positively to the reader’s next action in the close, you have a good ending. It can serve as a coherent summary to the entire message, leave your reader clear as to what you want him to do, and serve as a stimulant to his doing it soon.
  6. In inquiries about people, establish the privileged aspects.
    - a) When you ask a man for information that might get him in trouble, promise confidential treatment of whatever information he may make available to you.
    - b) When you have permission to make this inquiry, say so.
    - c) Show that you have an interest to protect. That idea is usually established when you state your contemplated relationship with the person inquired about.

### Favorable Reply Check List

1. Make your opening sentence establish the fact that you are doing what your reader has asked you to do.
  - a) When you are saying "Yes," say it immediately! Best bet in a situation involving a person is a specific identification of what the person did for you and for how long. When you are sending something, establish that fact in the opening lines.
  - b) The most effective way to establish the fact that you're glad to do something is to begin immediately to do it. Specifically, "I am very glad to tell you . . ." is NOT so good an opening as "Henry Benton, about whom you inquired, did typing in the central office from August, 1962, to June, 1963."
  - c) DON'T emphasize the obvious: "This is an answer to . . ."; "Concerning your inquiry . . ."; "We have received your letter."
  - d) In this direct situation, a subject line can often get you and your reader off to a quick start. In a report about a person, make it identify the name of the person, establish the fact that he is the reader's applicant, and show by some appropriate label that this letter gives information.
2. Specificness of coverage and concreteness in comment are essential.
  - a) Answer every question—direct or implied—of the inquiry.
  - b) You want to evaluate for the reader when such evaluation will be helpful. But do more than editorialize with "fine," "splendid," "excellent." Back up your statements with specific citation of results and performance. In a personnel report, for instance:
    - (1) No applicant just stays on the payroll; he does some work. Tell your reader the specific job duties that the applicant performed for you. If he swept floors, arranged stock, or helped with window displays, say so.
    - (2) Analyze the job for which the applicant is presently applying and talk about those things which the applicant did for you that will be significant on this next job.
    - (3) A good personnel report tells something about work habits which indicate personality characteristics (co-operativeness, determination, punctuality, or whatever else applies).
  - c) Scant, skimpy treatment implies to some readers that you are unwilling to extend an ordinary business courtesy or that you are very dubious about the applicant, the project, or the reader.
3. Tone is all-important.
  - a) In a personnel report
    - (1) Remember that you are *reporting*, not promising future performance. Stick to concrete facts about what the person did while under your supervision.
    - (2) Beware of superlatives. Too glowing an account sounds unbelievable.
  - b) In telling or giving your reader something, don't do it grudgingly or parade your generosity.

**Favorable Reply Check List (Continued)**

4. You often have negative material to handle.
  - a) You aren't being honest when you entirely eliminate reporting a person's failure to measure up personally or professionally or when you entirely eliminate the drawbacks of something else you are reporting.
  - b) To keep from sounding caustic, bitter, or even warped, embed negative information and further subordinate through the amount of space and word choice.
  - c) When you must place restrictions on the reader's use of information or material you give him, be quick, be definite—and, since this is negative material, place the statement in the middle of the letter.
5. Remember the privileged aspects when you write about a person.
  - a) Label the letter confidential.
  - b) Indicate that it has been requested.
  - c) For coherence, incorporate these phrases in either beginning or ending statements.
6. When you are sending something tangible (printed material, a sample, for instance), add a few words of resale.
  - a) Make them short.
  - b) Make them as specific as you can.
7. End graciously and confidently.
  - a) Your expression of willingness ("glad to" or its equivalent)—which is much more appropriate here than it is in the beginning—nullifies any possible curt impression.
  - b) Don't suggest inadequacy of treatment: "I hope I've answered your questions . . ." or "If this is not what you want. . ." If you feel that way by the time you finish, you'd better rewrite the letter.
  - c) Certain expressions are the unfortunate victims of overuse and misuse. They destroy the conversational quality of your writing. "Please do not hesitate to" is just one example of what correspondents call "bromides." "Feel free to" is another.

**Invited Sales Check List**

1. Get started in a hurry!
  - a) The direct, specific, favorable answer to one of your reader's questions is the surest way of maintaining the interest you already have.
  - b) At least give a good sales point if no question can be answered affirmatively.
  - c) "Thank you for"—while perfectly nice—is slow.
  - d) Keep out the selfish sounds of "we're glad to have your letter," "we appreciate your interest," and their variants.
  - e) Certainly you do not want to begin with an answer containing negative information.
  - f) The attention-stimulating opening of the uninvited sales letter is bewildering and wasteful in this invited letter. You already have attention and interest.
2. Establish an order of points that makes for natural coherence and that gives your reader favorable information at the beginning and end of your letter (if possible, at the beginning and end of paragraphs). Embed touchy points, answers that you can be fairly sure are not what the reader wants to hear.
3. Completeness of coverage demands an answer to every question in your reader's inquiry, whether it is stated or implied. Failure to answer a question or at least to explain why you are not now answering it builds suspicion.
4. Psychological description is good selling.
  - a) Put this product to work in the life of the reader right from the start, and let reader-use sentences predominate throughout the letter. For example, this has good you-viewpoint:

As you ride slowly up and down stairs in your Stair-Traveller, you can be absolutely certain that you are safe as well as comfortable. When the current fails in Greenville, Specific Motors brakes hold your Stair-Traveller in place until the current comes on.

Writing dominated by "our product" presentation rapidly begins to pall, then bore; and it fails to make your reader visualize how he is going to benefit. The statement, "Stair-Traveller is equipped with Specific Motors brakes," is true but is not sales-building style.

- b) For best effect, however, get reader possession and/or participation instead of mechanical *you* beginnings. "You will like" and "you will find" do not necessarily inject you-viewpoint. For example, the passage—

You will discover that the colors in which the lamp is available blend in with any color scheme. You will also like the extra claw feet on the large brass base, which holds the lamp steadily in place

—is improved considerably when revised like this:

Either the forest green or the royal red shade will contrast effectively with your drapes. Six claw feet instead of the usual four

**Invited Sales Check List (Continued)**

hold your Richmond steadily in place; and your wife will prefer the hollow base and standard at cleaning time.

- c) You have to watch especially for denied negatives in invited sales letters. If a product is *not* something, what is it?
  - d) The enclosure (when you have one) itself is not the significant idea; the use the reader will make of it is what counts! See Item 4 of your special-request check list (p. 655).
  - e) Psychological description is persuasive, but you still need specific statements for conviction.
5. Adaptation is easy here; your reader's letter gives you many cues.
- a) Use his name in the salutation or in the first line or two if you do not use a salutation. Call him by name again in the second half of the letter.
  - b) You can easily work in a reference to his town and/or his firm or organization.
  - c) Refer easily and naturally to a commonplace action or event that you can be fairly sure is characteristic of his job, his community, his geographical area, or his economic status.
  - d) Age, social status, economic status, or professional status makes adjustment of your style desirable.
6. Try to cushion the shock of price when you have to settle the question.
- a) Cover your sales points before talking price unless you are writing bargain copy (usually not applicable in invited sales letters).
  - b) Consider the value of minimizing the effect through breaking down price in terms of time or units.
  - c) Can you make a comparison of what your product will cost him with what a familiar product or action costs him?
  - d) Link the benefit with the cost.
  - e) Price and method of payment should be understood. Many times these details may be included on an enclosure. And often they must be clarified after the visit of a sales representative.
7. Confidentially ask this reader to take some action. The closer it comes to nailing down the order, the better.
- a) Phrase the action specifically.
  - b) Make his response easy.
  - c) Work in a last plug about satisfaction with the product
  - d) Guard against the stereotyped and the high pressure.

**Credit Approval Check List**

1. The direct opening:
  - a) When there are goods to be shipped, ship them in the first line and in the first main clause.
  - b) If you use two main clauses, ship the goods first; the shipment answers a direct question and implies the approval of credit.
  - c) Inject a cheerful, welcoming, ungrudging tone in approving credit. Be careful that your opening sound neither condescending nor preachy.
  - d) Include a basic identification of the situation: name the goods specifically “don’t call it “order”!), state the amount (of goods and dollars, usually, though sometimes the dollar amount is assumed on the invoice).
  - e) In general, it’s probably better to identify method of shipment.
  - f) Choose words that get the goods to the reader; don’t stop with just getting them onto a freight car or at the start of your shipping line.
  - g) A touch of resale material (a favorable adjective, for example) is desirable, BUT
  - h) Do not slow up your fast-moving opening with too much resale/good will.
  - i) Use figures and symbols in order and acknowledgment letters.
  - j) Take care of all legal details: item prices, freight charges, total. You may assume an invoice or tabulate here.
2. The credit agreement/relation:
  - a) For credit restraint, explain how he has *earned* this credit extension.
  - b) Although you might identify terms incidentally in the opening, you’d explain them here.
  - c) Attach your interpretation of the terms to this purchase, with calendar dates: “You can take advantage of our discount terms by mailing your check for only \$123.48 on or before July 10. The full price of \$126 is due July 30. So you see you get the price of a box of candy by just sending that check a little early.” Just a rehashed generalization of what 2/10, n/30 means is pretty dull to retailers.
  - d) Concretize this discount talk with specific figures and store-cases interpretation (a free unit of purchase, a month’s phone bill . . .).
  - e) If you attempt prompt-pay education, be sure your tone implies your confidence that the reader *will* comply. “Your check for the full \$126 on or before July 30, however, will keep you in the preferred-customer class.”
  - f) With its negative potentialities, the credit-limit talk needs a *you*-viewpoint introduction and careful handling. That’s why you wouldn’t want it in the opening paragraph.
  - g) Treat the credit limit as a positive help, not a guarded limitation: He can buy up to \$100 (or whatever the limit is) in any one credit period. Label it temporary or provisional.
  - h) You can get some very undesirable backwash with an explanation of terms that says or implies, “If you don’t like these, we’ll change

**Credit Approval Check List (Continued)**

them." You'd not want to obligate yourself; so content yourself with a label of *temporary* and indicate your willingness to review the credit arrangement later.

3. Your resale or sales-promotional material in closing the letter:
  - a) Include some comment that reassures him of his good choice (unusual manufacturing process, experience of other users, . . . ).
  - b) Mention store services (to either a consumer or a dealer) and dealer aids (not to a consumer, only to a dealer). Refer to any dealer aids concretely and make them reasonable (display materials, catalogues, sales manuals, envelope stuffers, newspaper cuts and mats. Never all of these; whatever is appropriate). Make it clear that you have sent them or indicate exactly what you want him to do in requesting. Frequently one sees "Just make a note of how many you want when you send us your next order."
  - c) Whenever possible, tell him about allied goods or seasonal goods in which he might be interested; this is frequently the best way to end the letter: with a suggestion of ordering.
  - d) Regardless of how you close, let it be a forward look toward future orders.
  - e) And apply it specifically to this one case. The old universal that fades out with "We have enjoyed serving you and look forward to supplying your future needs" and its variants is wooden and dull; it's just another rubber stamp.
4. You want to make the customer feel appreciated, of course; but your appreciation—even for a new customer—is better worked in incidentally throughout the letter instead of in obvious sentences or paragraphs.
5. Your best transitions (for tight coherence) are provided by logical order of points discussed. This one holds together without too much cement:
  - Shipment and arrival of goods, incidental credit approval.
  - Basis for credit.
  - Specific credit terms, emphasizing reader's advantage in discounting (when appropriate), assuming prompt payments.
  - Credit limit.
  - Resale of goods and new goods.
  - Store services.
  - Forward look to other orders.
6. Watch the TONE throughout the letter.
  - a) Avoid FBI implications about the credit investigation and condescending, mandatory, or selfish explanation of the terms.
  - b) Remember that proportion affects your tone, too. Too much space given to any point automatically affects your tone (especially true in talk of terms and limits).

### Check List for Standard Acknowledgments

1. Of greatest interest to the reader is the complete, accurate shipment.
  - a) Send the goods in the first sentence—to emphasize the good news.
  - b) Follow the goods through to arrival and reader satisfaction in using them.
  - c) Clearly identify the order by one or more of date, number, specific reference to the goods by name—perhaps a complete listing.
  - d) If you list, tabulate—in the letter if short; on a referred-to invoice if long.
  - e) Clear up any confusion about payment details.
  - f) Consider whether method of shipment should be identified.
2. Resale is part of acknowledgments to reassure the reader about his choice.
  - a) Make it specific.
  - b) Keep it short.
  - c) Adapt it to your product and reader (consumer versus dealer, for instance).
3. Resale on the house, especially important to new customers, may be used with others.
  - a) For a consumer: personal shopping, delivery schedules, credit possibilities.
  - b) For a dealer: salesmen, manuals, displays, and advertising aids and programs.
  - c) If you talk advertising programs, give the names of publications and radio or TV stations, amount of space or time, and schedules; and emphasize how the advertising promotes sales: "Your customers will be asking for . . . because of the full-page ads running. . . ."
  - d) If you talk credit, invite application rather than promise without checking.
4. Sales-promotion material can indicate service attitude and build sales volume.
  - a) Keep it appropriate—usually on seasonal goods or something allied to the purchase.
  - b) You-attitude and specificity are necessary to good sales promotion.
  - c) Emphasize your service to the customer, not your selfish desire to sell more: "We also make . . ." or "We'd also like to sell you. . . ."
  - d) Put the emphasis on reader action when referring to any enclosures you use.
5. Look forward to future orders.
  - a) If sales-promotion material is the basis, suggest specific action and make it easy.
  - b) If resale talk is the basis, continue in terms of reader satisfaction rather than suggest that something will go wrong.
  - c) Guard against bromides and Greedy Gus wording as you close.

## Check List for Approving Adjustments

1. Make the beginning fast, informative, pleasant, and reassuring.
  - a) Open with the full reparation.
  - b) Avoid any grudging tone.
  - c) Give a specific statement of what you are doing.
  - d) Build up the favorable reaction with a few resale words implying the reader's pleasure in the use of the restored article or in your fairness.
  - e) Too much product resale before explanation may bring an "Oh yeah?"
2. Throughout the letter, avoid emphasis on the disappointing aspects by avoiding negative words.
3. Explain fully, honestly, and reassuringly any favorable facts.
  - a) Include a good-will-building sentence—either that you're glad to make the adjustment OR that you welcome the report as an aid in maintaining quality and service.
  - b) Whichever you choose, be sure your facts follow logically from your wording of the adjustment you've made.
  - c) Judicially, impartially—and preferably impersonally—establish the reason for the mishap *in the minimum number of words*. Often you can effectively imply the reason in your explanation of corrective measures taken or of the ordinary care taken.
  - d) Whether you name or imply the source of error, give concrete evidence of normally correct, safe shipments of high-quality goods or—if applicable—explain changes you are making to prevent recurrence of the difficulty.
  - e) Be quick to admit error; don't appear to be buck-passing.
  - f) Avoid suggesting frequency of error.
4. Ask for any necessary co-operation from the customer. For example:
  - a) Be definite and polite in asking the customer to sign necessary blanks.
  - b) Clear up what is to be done with the original article if you're replacing it.
  - c) Make his action as little trouble as possible ("When the expressman calls to pick up the original shipment, just have him . . .").
5. Close pleasantly with a forward look.
  - a) Don't tear up your good positive efforts with a backward look apologizing or otherwise recalling the disappointing aspects.
  - b) Do leave the customer with a pleasant reminder of the pleasurable use of the perfect article now in his hands, if applicable.
  - c) You may end the letter with resale talk, but sales-promotional material on an allied article may well suggest your additional thoughtfulness—and just may pick up an extra sale.

**Check List for Refusing Requests**

1. Your buffer opening must establish compatibility through its pleasantness.
  - a) One of the poorest starts is talk about how pleased or flattered you are. It's vain and selfish.
  - b) Shift the emphasis to your reader—even though your talk may be no more than how worthwhile you think his project is.
  - c) If you appear to be on the verge of granting the request, your refusal is even more disappointing when it comes.
  - d) Nor do you want to intimate the refusal at this point. Especially guard against "I really wish we could. . . ."
  - e) Beginning too far away from the subject of the request results in incoherence. From the buffer content the reader should be able to tell immediately and unmistakably that this is an answer to his request.
2. Your transition must continue the same line of thought set out in your buffer opening.
  - a) To avoid selfish-sounding turns, keep the emphasis on the reader.
  - b) At the start of the turn, *although, however, but, yet*, signal unmistakably that there's to be a turn for the worse. Avoid them as sentence or paragraph beginnings.
  - c) Avoid, also, the insincere "Although I should like to. . . ."
  - d) You must supply the bridging sentence that shows your reader why you are going into the explanation.
3. Give at least one good reason (it may be more) for the refusal BEFORE implying or stating the refusal. That is the most significant procedure in the reason-first turndown.
  - a) Ferret out and give emphasis to those reasons which are for the benefit of someone other than yourself. If possible, associate the reader with these benefits.
  - b) Don't attempt to hide behind the skirts of "our policy." Policies as such merit little respect; the reasons behind them do.
  - c) For believability, you need specificness.
  - d) Stick to plausibilities; family difficulties, financial troubles, acts of God, and the like are suspect (the reader isn't likely to believe you; besides, they're of questionable taste).
4. The refusal itself should be
  - a) A logical outcome of the reasons given. Ideally, the reader should deduce the refusal before he sees your definite indication of it.
  - b) Presented positively—in terms of what you *can* and *do* do rather than in terms of what you *can't* or *don't*.
  - c) Preceded and also followed by positive justifying reasons.
  - d) Unmistakable but implied or subordinated. Be sure there's no room for doubt. Make clear that you *can't* or *won't*. Consider the wisdom of *only, exclusively, confine to*.
  - e) Written without negative words like *impossible, must refuse, very sorry to tell you that we cannot*.

**Check List for Refusing Requests (Continued)**

- f) Without apologies, which just weaken your case. Concentrate, instead, on what is hopeful in the case.
- 5. Continue to talk long enough to convince your reader of your real interest in him and his problems, without recalling the refusal.
  - a) Your ending material must be positive and about something within the sphere of the reader's interest.
  - b) Watch for bromides and rubber stamps in the end.
  - c) Be wary of the expression "If there is any other help I can give you, please let me know." It can produce some sarcastic reactions.

**Back-Order Check List**

1. Opening: If you are sending any goods, say so immediately and give necessary details.
  - a) If not, begin with a short buffer which is basically resale.
  - b) Quickly, but subordinately, identify the order by date, number, and/or description.
  - c) Slow: "We have received . . . , " "Thank you for your. . . ."
  - d) Selfish: "We're glad to have. . . ."
  - e) Provide some resale on the problem article before the bad news, but don't imply that you are sending the article now.
  - f) Make the resale specific, not "We're sure you'll like these shoes." Why?
  - g) Use only brief phrases for resale on goods sent, or for any new-customer aspects, until you've handled the key point.
2. Positively handling the bad news:
  - a) Picture the goods moving toward or being used by the customer before indicating that you do not now have them: "So that you'll have these play suits while the selling season is still going strong, we'll air-express them to you at least by the 27th."
  - b) Avoid negatives: "out of stock," "cannot send," "can't send until."
  - c) Adapt to the one situation rather than a universal like "In order to give you the very best service we can. . . ."
  - d) Give a justifying reason for being caught short—preferably resale in effect, like insistence on quality or surprising popularity.
  - e) Do make clear when you *can* ship.
  - f) To avoid cancellation of the order, resale is more important in this than in other acknowledgments; interweave it wherever you can and definitely end with it.
3. Resale on the house, especially important to new customers, may be used with others.
  - a) For a consumer: personal shopping, delivery schedules, credit possibilities.
  - b) For a dealer: salesmen, manuals, displays, and advertising aids and programs.
  - c) If you talk advertising programs, give the names of publications and radio or TV stations, amount of space or time, and schedules; and emphasize how the advertising promotes sales: "Your customers will be asking for . . . because of the full-page ads running. . . ."
  - d) If you talk credit, invite application rather than promise without checking.
4. Sales-promotion material can indicate service attitude and build sales volume.
  - a) Keep it appropriate—usually on seasonal goods or something allied to the purchase.
  - b) You-attitude and specificity are necessary to good sales promotion.
  - c) Emphasize your service to the customer, not your selfish desire to sell more: not "We also make . . . " or "We'd also like to sell you. . . ."

**Back-Order Check List (Continued)**

- d) Put the emphasis on reader action when referring to any enclosures you use.
- 5. Look forward to future orders.
  - a) If sales-promotion material is the basis, suggest specific action and make it easy.
  - b) If resale talk is the basis, continue in terms of reader satisfaction rather than suggest that something will go wrong.
  - c) Guard against bromides and Greedy Gus wording as you close.
- 6. Word the back-order action phrase to stress the action you want.
  - a) Ask about it only if you seriously doubt that your plan will be satisfactory; normally you should phrase your letter to complete the contract (that is, accept the offer to buy) unless he takes the initiative and cancels.
  - b) Emphasize his acceptance rather than refusal; avoid suggesting what you don't want (cancellation), as in "Unless you prefer otherwise . . .," "Unless you direct us to. . . ."

**Check List for Suggesting a Substitute**

1. Your opening:
  - a) For acknowledgment, rely mainly on implication: maybe the date of the order and a general reference to the class of goods.
  - b) Make the reference broad enough to encompass A (product ordered) and B (substitute).
  - c) But don't call either one by specific trade name, model, or number yet.
  - d) Let the buffer comment be resale in effect, on the line of goods or on the house, but not specifically on A.
  - e) Intimating at this point that you're going to ship anything could mean only A to the reader.
  - f) Establish early the kinship—the similar nature—of A and B, with emphasis on points in B's favor.
  - g) Show gratitude for the customer's return to you with his business (if it applies).
  - h) The routine "Thank you" or the selfish "We're glad to have" is usually not the best way.
2. Your transition:
  - a) Introduction of B should follow naturally from what you have said before.
  - b) Before revealing that you can't send A, introduce B *and* at least one of its strong points.
  - c) Calling B a substitute or "just as good" defeats your strategy.
3. Your statement of unavailability:
  - a) As always, stress what you *can* do, not what you can't; saying that you can send only B makes adequately clear that you can't send A.
  - b) Identify A by name no more than once—when you clear it out of stock.
  - c) Present the bad news early enough to avoid puzzling the reader—and increasing his disappointment when he does get the word.
  - d) Make perfectly clear that you can't send A.
  - e) Stress why you carry B rather than why you don't stock A; else you'll be criticizing something the reader chose, knocking a competitor, or disparaging a product you once sold.
4. Your sales message on B:
  - a) Sell B on its own merits; it's a good product; no apologies needed.
  - b) Seek out the sales points and apply them concretely and specifically.
  - c) Interpret these points in terms of reader benefits (consumer or dealer).
5. Overcoming price resistance:
  - a) Cover sales points before price unless it is the big advantage.
  - b) Justify any price increase in terms of advantages.
  - c) Price resistance is less if price-increase talk is in terms of units rather than the whole order and if you make everyday, lifelike comparisons.
6. Word your action ending to keep the order *and* good will.
  - a) Make responding easy, as always.

**Check List for Suggesting a Substitute (Continued)**

- b)* Work in a last plug about satisfaction with the product.
- c)* High pressure is out of place in this letter, especially in the end.
- d)* If you send the substitute, make clear that he can return it and you pay the transportation both ways; legally and ethically you have to.
- e)* But encourage keeping, rather than returning, by where you put the emphasis.

**Refused-Adjustment Check List**

1. Make your buffer beginning positive, related, adequate, and progressive.
  - a) Reflect a pleasant, co-operative attitude (try to agree on something).
  - b) But begin closely enough to the situation to show that this is an acknowledgment and to lead naturally to the next part.
  - c) Don't imply that you're granting the request and thus make refusing harder.
  - d) Avoid recalling the dissatisfaction any more strongly than necessary.
  - e) Watch buffer length: (1) too short and breezy a buffer does not enable you to match up your reader's and your own tone and tempo; but (2) more than two short paragraphs holds off your facts and reasons too long.
  - f) Too much resale on the product—especially in the trouble area—gets a sour-grapes reaction if presented before the reasons for refusal show it was not faulty.
2. Make your facts and reasons courteous, thorough, and convincing.
  - a) An immediate plunge (usually at the beginning of the second paragraph) into "a thorough examination" or "our policy" is abrupt. A transitional sentence indicating desire to keep up good service is always acceptable.
  - b) The cold, apparently inflexible "our guarantee states . . ." is particularly annoying as the lead in the explanation. Eliminate *guarantee* and *policy*.
  - c) Don't accuse the reader or preach at him. Phrase your review of circumstances *impersonally*—and let him derive his own guilt.
  - d) Definitely establish the explicit facts—the evidence and the reasoning that are the basis for your refusal which is to follow.
  - e) Even intimating the refusal before at least some justifying facts and reasons is a violation of your entire psychology and inductive strategy.
  - f) Whenever possible, interpret the reasoning to show reader benefits.
3. Make the refusal follow logically, in subordinate and impersonal phrasing; but be sure it is clear and justified.
  - a) Preferably the reader sees the refusal coming at the same time or shortly before he sees any definite statement or implication of it.
  - b) Give little emphasis to the refusal—certainly not the prominence of a paragraph beginning or ending, or independent-clause structure.
  - c) Keep it impersonal and positive. Phrased in terms of what you do rather than what you don't, the refusal is implied clearly.
  - d) Be sure it is there, however; unclear is as bad as too strong.
  - e) Follow the refusal with more justifying reasons, and show whatever possible reader benefits result from your deciding as you do.
  - f) Make your explanation convincing; the quick-brushoff treatment is infuriating.
  - g) A counterproposal can sometimes adequately imply the refusal.
4. Make your ending pleasant, positive, and success-conscious.
  - a) An off-the-subject ending about store services, seasonal goods that

**Refused-Adjustment Check List (Continued)**

might interest the reader, or some topic of general interest is appropriate.

- b) Do not suggest that you aren't sure of your ground by some worn-out expression like "We trust this is satisfactory" or "We're sure you understand our position." Watch *hope* and *trust*; they suggest doubt.
  - c) Apologies are unnecessary reminders of trouble; your careful explanation showing that the fault is not yours has already made the best apology.
- ~~~~~

You'll have a good check list for the **compromise adjustment** if you substitute the following for Items 3 and 4 in the **Refused-Adjustment Check List**.

- 3. Make your counterproposal as logical, helpful relief.
  - a) Be careful to make a smooth transition from the explanation (which implies refusal of the requested adjustment) to the counterproposal.
  - b) Offer it ungrudgingly, without parading your generosity; but let the service element rather than price comparisons or sales pressure prevail.
  - c) Don't belittle it ("about the best we can do") or make it sound like a harsh penalty ("a service charge will *have* to be made").
- 4. Use a modified action ending.
  - a) Ask permission; you wouldn't go ahead without customer agreement.
  - b) Tell what he is to do and how to do it; but don't urge acceptance.
  - c) Promise quick attention and satisfactory results, to reinforce your service attitude shown earlier.

**Check List for Acknowledging Incomplete Orders**

1. Opening: If you are sending any goods, say so immediately and give necessary details.
  - a) If not, begin with a short buffer which is basically resale.
  - b) Quickly, but subordinately, identify the order by date, number, and/or description.
  - c) Slow: "We have received . . . , " "Thank you for your. . . ."
  - d) Selfish: "We're glad to have. . . ."
  - e) Provide some resale on the problem article before the bad news, but don't imply that you are sending the article now.
  - f) Make the resale specific, not "We're sure you'll like these shoes." Why?
  - g) Use only brief phrases for resale on *goods sent*, or for any new-customer aspects, until you've asked for the missing information.
2. Ask for the information naturally, positively, and specifically.
  - a) The natural transition to the request follows from preceding resale talk.
  - b) Preface the request with a reader-benefit phrase—something like "So that you'll be sure to get just the X you want, please. . . ."
  - c) Make the request fairly early—but not too quickly or abruptly—to avoid puzzling.
  - d) Avoid the accusation and wasted words of such phrasing as "You did not include" or "We need some additional information."
  - e) Name the customer's options: color choices, different models, for example.
  - f) Add explanations to help in the choice, resell, and show your interest in satisfying.
  - g) Keep the *you*-viewpoint: "You may choose from . . . , " not "We have three shades."
3. Close with a drive for the specific action you want.
  - a) If many words follow the first indication of what you want done, repeat specifically.
  - b) Make replying easy (maybe a return card to check or a return envelope).
  - c) Refer to the enclosure subordinately; the requested action deserves the emphasis.
  - d) Stress your promptness and his—preferably a date of arrival if he acts now.
  - e) But keep it logical; post office speed is not that of a Coca-Cola machine.
  - f) Try to work in a last short reference to reader satisfaction from the article.

(If resale on the house and/or sales-promotion material would be appropriate—as the first surely would be in a new-customer situation—use Items 3 and 4 of the **Check List for Standard Acknowledgments** (p. 640 as additional Items 4 and 5 here.)

**Check List for Compromise with Full-Reparation Beginning**

1. The beginning giving the customer everything he has asked for is basic—to dissolve his wrath and get him to listen to reason.
  - a) Make it immediately, specifically, and completely (thus identifying the situation).
  - b) Build up the wholesome effect by a friendly, adapted expression to emphasize your integrity and reliability and prevent a curt tone.
  - c) Don't apologize more; *la* is an apology of the most concrete form.
  - d) Carefully avoid negative reminders (in the identification, for instance).
  - e) Beginning with the compromise suggestion would infuriate most readers. Since they think they're entitled to what they asked, you have to show otherwise before compromising.
2. The explanation must show that he is expecting too much.
  - a) Don't be too slow about getting to at least some of the explanation.
  - b) Interpret it with a reader viewpoint and positive statement.
  - c) Do not directly accuse; show blame impersonally (perhaps by customer education on the use and care of the article).
  - d) Establish the facts, to show the customer that he is at least partly responsible or is overestimating his loss.
3. Show the service attitude and your fair-mindedness in your proposal.
  - a) As the foundation of your proposal, stress serving your customer's interests.
  - b) Recall the original desire for the service the product can render—the reason he bought—and apply it to the modified conditions.
  - c) Continuing the reader-benefit interpretation, state your proposal.
  - d) Follow your suggestion with any other plausible sales points.
  - e) Don't parade your generosity in the loss you take. Establish it and let it speak for itself.
  - f) Suggest—don't command or preach or high-pressure him. Low-pressure sales effort further indicates your generosity and fairness.
4. The modified action ending should give a choice but encourage the one you prefer.
  - a) Tell what you want him to do: reject (return) the full reparation and accept your proposal.
  - b) As in any action ending, make action easy.
  - c) Do not bog down with apologies or references to the full reparation; he can take it if he wants to, but hope he forgets it.
  - d) End with a short suggestion of his satisfactory use of the product.

**Credit Refusal Check List****1. Your opening:**

- a) Your best beginning talks about something pleasant: the good market; the timeliness of the order (if there was one); the reader's experience, insight, or ambition.
- b) Beware the selfish note of "We are glad to receive" or "It pleases us."
- c) As part of the continuous effort throughout the letter to keep your reader from considering buying elsewhere when he finds that he can't buy from you on credit, get resale material early in the letter (on the product, if ordered; otherwise on the house).
- d) For a consumer, depict pleasure in use; for a dealer, tie in the reader's profit possibilities with this resale talk.
- e) References to his order, if there was one, should be worked in incidentally while you say something of more significance.
- f) Be careful not to mislead the reader into thinking that you are extending the credit.

**2. Your explanation:**

- a) Stick to the theme of a strong, healthy financial condition for the reader; you then have fewer transitional difficulties and less negative effect.
- b) By all means, do not begin your explanation with writer-interest reasons.
- c) By careful analysis of the situation, give justifying reasons BEFORE the refusal.
- d) The real reason for refusing, of course, is some financial maladjustment (a current ratio or an acid-test ratio out of line) or a record of not paying bills. Meet the issue squarely. To base your refusal on other grounds is shirking. His advantages in cash buying, for instance, are NOT reasons for your refusing credit. If character is not the basis for refusal, be sure to make that fact clear; otherwise the reader will almost certainly think you are reflecting on his integrity.
- e) Avoid the negative, critical, nosy, or patronizing tone by stating your reasons in terms of helpfulness to the reader, with the positive assumption that he can and will correct the situation. Make just enough references to the facts to let him see that you know—not specific enough to suggest an FBI investigation and not so general as to suggest that you don't know what you're talking about.
- f) Be sure you've made perfectly clear that you will not now approve credit (though this may be done through the statement of your counterproposal).
- g) Hiding behind "our policy" evades the issue (and appears selfish); you need to give him the justifying reasons for maintaining it.
- h) Phrase your reason for the refusal in terms of your experience with other customers. Do not make it a personal relationship between you and him.
- i) Always leave the way open for credit extension later.

### **Credit Refusal Check List (Continued)**

- j) But you can't make definite promises; the decision will have to be made on the basis of how things look later.
- 3. Your counterproposal:
  - a) The cash plan or reduced shipment is the thing you want him to turn to as a hopeful relief upon finding that he cannot get credit; bring this idea in shortly after your refusal.
  - b) But show first why you're going into all this; preface the discussion with some short, helpful-sounding reader-benefit sentence.
  - c) If you propose cash with a discount, figure the savings and concretely enliven by talking about specific units of the product.
  - d) Possibly project the savings over a year's business to make them loom larger.
  - e) Can you suggest smaller orders? Especially to a dealer, point out the advantages of local financing?
  - f) Use the conditional mood in your explanation and your proposal.
- 4. Your ending:
  - a) Leave no details uncovered in your proposal of how to handle the present situation.
  - b) In regular action-ending style, drive for his acceptance of your proposal.
  - c) Success-consciousness (assuming his acceptance) precludes the use of "Why not. . . ."
  - d) You have to get his approval before taking any action other than the one he specified.
  - e) Your last picture should show the reader's benefits from trading with you.
- 5. Your tone:
  - a) Throughout your letter retain an attitude of helpfulness to the reader.
  - b) Sales-promotional material on other goods is hardly appropriate when he can't even pay for the ones he already wants.

### Special Request Check List

1. Your opening should be dominated by something of reader interest.
  - a) The unmotivated phrasing of your basic request (no buildup, no preparation) is likely to defeat your purpose. Differentiate between the question that arouses interest or suggests a benefit (as in C-plan letters) and the question that really gets an answer (as in A-plan).
  - b) When you can, develop a reader-benefit theme. Altruism is a second-best appeal.
  - c) The question with obvious "Yes" or "No" answer is usually not good because it stops rather than starts careful consideration of your proposition. Certainly, eliminate any question that could allow your reader to form a "No" response to your basic request.
  - d) Are you promising too much (like total attendance of a group)?
  - e) Don't depend on obvious flattery to win the reader's acquiescence.
  - f) The use of a subject line is unsound here—as in any C-plan letter. It lets the cat out of the bag before you can mention favorable points.
  - g) Explanations do not arouse interest; save them for the middle. Until you emphasize the role of the reader—sometimes in terms of what he gives but usually in terms of what he gets—he is not interested in details of what, where, when, or how many.
2. For clear, natural transitions, keep the reader in your passages which explain your proposal.
  - a) Do give necessary details to prove that your project deserves his consideration and to enable him to act as you request (such details as size and nature of audience he'll face, conditions under which a task will have to be carried out, for example).
  - b) But don't let these details dominate the letter. Give your major positions and space to development of what the reader gets or contributes by complying with your request.
  - c) Adapt your letter to your reader; when you can, personalize it. Refer casually to a commonplace action or event that you can be fairly sure is characteristic of his job or his community or his geographical area or of his economic status. Even in mass form mailings you can do this.
  - d) If the letter is of any length, consider calling him by name in the second half of the letter or referring specifically to his home city.
  - e) Do not phrase the explicit request until most of the reasons (benefits) for the reader's compliance have been established.
  - f) In language that's free and natural, make the reader's participation sound easy—maybe even fun!
3. The potentially negative element is usually present (not enough money, inconvenient time, request for confidential material).
  - a) Complete elimination of the negative element is unethical and wasteful (because it usually involves additional correspondence).
  - b) Minimize the effect by positive statement—what you *can* do rather than what you cannot—embedded position, and minimum space.
  - c) Maintain a tone of positive confidence. Do not apologize for what

you can do, regardless of how insignificant it may be; do not suggest that the request is trouble or is trivial.

- d) Don't supply excuses for your reader (how busy he is, how many requests he receives). He'll think up enough without your help!
  - e) When you ask for confidential material or evaluative opinion or anything else that might make your reader hesitate, give assurance that you will handle the material in whatever limited way he specifies.
4. The following style suggestions apply any time you have an enclosure; they are not restricted to special requests.
- a) Don't divert attention from your letter to the enclosure until you have carried your reader near enough to the end that he'll finish it before turning away; he may not come back.
  - b) Whether you're enclosing a questionnaire, folder, envelope stuffer, or leaflet, refer to it in subordinate fashion in a sentence emphasizing some other factor of significance.
- Very poor: "Enclosed you will find a folder. . . ."  
"I have enclosed a folder. . . ."
- Passable: "The enclosed folder describes. . . ."
- Better: "Read in the enclosed folder how your dollars help provide medical care for needy children."

5. After you've covered the significant reasons why he should do what you want him to do and have given adequate details so that he understands exactly what it is you seek, then ask confidently for his action.
- a) All good action endings contain four elements: what to do, how to do it, helps and/or suggestions for ease of action, and reason for prompt action.
  - b) Phrase specifically (not "any information you can send" or "anything you can do to help") in a direct request; don't hint. Name the specific action you want him to take: write, phone, wire, come in—whatever is appropriate.
  - c) Discard the vague generalities about "early reply," "hear from you soon," and the like. If there is a time limitation, establish it specifically, but subordinately, and justify it.
  - d) Establish your appreciation cordially in first person future conditional—and attach your expression of gratitude to his specific action. Watch your *shall's* and *will's*, which can imply that your reader does not have the right to refuse. *Should* and *would* establish the conditional mood. Don't "thank in advance"; to do so is lazy and presumptuous. An offer to reciprocate may or may not be appropriate.
  - e) When you include a return envelope (which may be return addressed but is not logically self-addressed), don't make an issue of it. Refer to it incidentally in a sentence emphasizing something else.
  - f) Inject a last punch line (preferably a phrase or clause rather than a sentence) which throws emphasis back on your reader: the benefit he receives or the significance of his contribution.

### Prospecting Sales Check List

1. Get started effectively and economically.
  - a) Point up a specific reader benefit in the first sentence.
  - b) Establish early the distinctive advantages your product has over competitors; it is often your best central selling point.
  - c) If you use a gadget, a trick, an anecdote, be sure it leads naturally and quickly to what your product does.
  - d) Beginning too far from the *distinctive* thing your product will do is slow and may be distracting. "In your new home, protection from fire is of major importance," may precede talk about asbestos, fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, or even lightning rods. Just assume such ideas and get started more directly and specifically.
  - e) Don't begin with either an obvious statement or a question to which the answer is obvious: "Do you want to make money?" or "Don't you want all the protection you can get in your home?" The question with the obvious answer is worse if you give the answer, too: "Wouldn't you gladly pay 2¢ a day for increased protection from fire?" might be effective with most property owners, but it wouldn't be if you add "Of course you would!" or "You can do just that with XYZ!"
  - f) Suggest or remind but don't preach: "You will want," "You will need."
  - g) Build up the desirability of the product before introducing it specifically by name. Don't plunge in with something like "XYZ—the answer to homeowners' prayers!" or "What is XYZ? XYZ, Mr. Homeowner, is a new and different. . . ."
  - h) Don't claim too much for your product, especially in the opening.
  - i) You'll usually do better to stick to positive selling, at least to avoid the pushover aspects of the predicament-to-remedy approach.
  - j) Concentrate on your central selling point in the lead; don't split your appeal by attempting to cover too many points.
2. Back up your opening promise with a persuasive description.
  - a) Though the *you*-viewpoint is not automatically injected with frequent use of *you* ("you will find" and "you will note" are often more wordy than persuasive), when you make the reader the subject or object of action verbs, you help to maintain it.
  - b) Guard against stark product description. A sentence is usually off to a bad start with "Our goods," "We make," or "XYZ is made of."
  - c) Interpret physical features in terms of the reader's benefit in the use of the product each time you bring out a point. By depicting the reader's use and benefit, you help to avoid incoherence.
  - d) Specificness in description is necessary for conviction.
  - e) Adapt your letter. Even in a form letter, refer to some action or condition that applies to your list as a whole. Avoid a reference which brands your letter as an obvious form ("Mr. Homeowner" or ". . . whether you live in Maine or California"). See pp. 109-12 for references that make your reader feel that you're talking right to him.

**Prospecting Sales Check List (Continued)**

- f) The history of the product or firm will bore most readers.
  - g) Eliminate challenging superlatives: "What could be finer than . . .," "amazing," "unbelievable," "sensational," "the finest," "the best."
  - h) Guard against the trite and inappropriate "truly" and "really" as well as the indefinite "that" and "which" in expressions like "that important conference" or "that important date."
3. Be sure to cover all important points with proper relative emphasis.
- a) Give enough detail to sell your reader on reading your enclosure when you have one (you usually do) and even more detail when you do not. For many products, a two-page letter will outpull a one-page letter. "If you're gonna sell, you gotta tell."
  - b) Select the most appropriate central selling point.
  - c) Stress your central theme for a singleness of impression.
  - d) Provide adequate conviction. Consider construction details, specific identification of tests and specific results (performance under actual conditions, before-and-after comparisons), testimonials, number of users, and guarantees.
  - e) After covering most of your sales points, introduce your enclosure with a sentence also incorporating a reference to an action of your reader and establishing a genuine sales point. Acceptable but dull: "The inside pages will give you names of XYZ users." Alive and persuasive: "Turn the page and read what some of the 4,000 users of XYZ have said about it."
4. Remember the price; it is an integral part of any sales message.
- a) Unless you sell on a recognized-bargain appeal (you ordinarily don't), minimize price by ways discussed on pp. 157-58.
  - b) Try to keep price out of the ending, certainly the last sentence.
  - c) If for good reason you do not talk price, reassure the reader that it is not out of line and offer to give price in some other message.
5. Forthrightly ask for appropriate action.
- a) Name the specific action you want your reader to take.
  - b) Be success-conscious. Avoid "If you'd like . . .," "We think you'd like . . .," and "Why not . . .?" "Your signature on the enclosed card will bring you . . ." or "Just sign . . ." maintain the right tone.
  - c) Avoid high-pressure bromides: "Why wait?" "Don't delay!" "Order today!" "Do it now!"
  - d) Refer casually to the order-facilitating device (card, envelope, order blank).
  - e) End with a quick reference to what the product will contribute (a condensed reminder of the central selling point).

**Dealer Sales Check List**

1. A dealer-letter opening has to move fast.
  - a) In action language, picture the act of selling and endow the product with consumer appeal. You can create the effect with "What are you going to tell your customers when they come in asking for a Multimower, the new kind of lawnmower they've been reading about in the *Saturday Evening Post*?"
  - b) Use a distinctive point of appeal and thus eliminate slow, general copy like "Are you looking for something new and different to show your customers?" or even this: "Would you like to sell a modern, efficient lawnmower that has price appeal as well as quality appeal?"
  - c) Avoid exaggeration such as "Do you want to stock an item that will sell like wildfire and give your customers the greatest satisfaction?"
  - d) Forget elementary merchandising lectures like "Satisfaction of your customers means turnover and profits to you."
  - e) Every good sales letter devotes at least the beginning to the reader. A dealer is interested in your product only when you show him how he will benefit. This one completely forgets the Number-1 man in its selfishness: "8,000 Multimowers have been sold directly from our factory, and now that a large demand has been built up for the product, we want to sell the Multimower through dealers."
2. To stress consumer demand and to avoid selfish-sounding product-viewpoint presentation, explain the high points of the product in terms of retail customers' reactions, demands—and approval, that lead to high-volume sales.
  - a) Talk in terms of sales by the dealer—not his use of the product.
  - b) Adaptation here means talking of sales demonstrations to customers, wrapping up a purchase and handing it across the counter, ringing up a sale, answering customers' questions, and the like.
  - c) The best order probably first takes up the salability of the product; without consumer appeal, the product stays on the shelves. The dealer is interested in price spread, of course, but more interested in a good item which is in demand.
3. Show how the manufacturer helps to push the sale.
  - a) Refer to whatever dealer aids you have as local-demand builders. Without effective sales aids (advertising, displays, mats, cuts), the dealer's selling job is harder.
  - b) Give working ideas of size (quarter-page, half-page), extent (time it will run), and coverage (specific medium—magazine, newspaper, radio, and/or TV station—and type of audience).
  - c) Interpret any advertising as building consumer interest and promoting interested inquiries at the dealer's: "Your customers have been reading about . . ." or "Many of your customers are already familiar with . . ." or "To help sell your customers. . . ."
4. Continue the interpretation of profitable selling in the price talk.
  - a) Price is more appropriately handled late because (1) regardless of

**Dealer Sales Check List (Continued)**

your markup, there's not much profit unless the goods move; so you want to establish demand first; (2) price is more naturally handled as you ask for an order and talk payment details.

- b) Include a specific mention of price spread: "You buy for \$3 and sell for \$5." Or you can cite percentages. Many good letters do both.
- c) Terms and manner of payment have to be cleared up.
- 5. You will almost always have some enclosures to handle.
  - a) You wouldn't want to divert attention to the enclosure until your reader is near enough the end that he'll complete the letter before turning away.
  - b) Make the reference to further material carry a real sales point, too. (See Item 4 of the special request check list, p. 655).
  - c) Don't depend too heavily on your enclosure to do the selling job; establish enough points so that this dealer-reader has a good idea of what he'll read about in the enclosure.
- 6. Make the action ending brief and businesslike too.
  - a) You're probably on safer ground in avoiding commands to this seasoned buyer.
  - b) Exaggerated superlatives are out of place here, too.
  - c) Of course, you name the specific action you want him to take.
  - d) And you make that action easy.
  - e) Use a whip-back or stimulus, suggesting prompt handling and profitable selling.

### Collection Letter Check List

1. Follow a reasonable philosophy and adapted procedure.
  - a) Associate the specific goods with the obligation to pay for them and show that you *expect payment because it is due*.
  - b) Identify how much is due and how long overdue in every letter.
  - c) After the first two stages, these identifications (in b, and perhaps the point in a) are *not* good beginnings. You need a Plan-C beginning, mentioning reader benefits to get attention.
  - d) Stick to your sequence of assumptions for the different collection stages; backtracking shows your weakness and loses reader respect.
  - e) Try to get the money *and* keep the customer's good will.
2. Fit the tone carefully to the circumstances.
  - a) Avoid seeming to tell the reader how to run his business. (Reader-interest reasons for payment and resale material help to avoid preachiness.)
  - b) Nasty, curt, injured, pouting, exasperated, or harsh tone serves only to turn the reader against you and make collection harder.
  - c) A condescending or scolding holier-than-thou attitude will bring more resentment than money.
  - d) To avoid the condescension of uttering credit platitudes, subordinate references to credit principles and regulations by emphasizing their significance in the particular case.
  - e) Show confidence that the debtor will pay, by
    - (1) avoiding references to past or future correspondence (which sound like whining and suggest ignoring this letter too), and
    - (2) stressing positive benefits of payment (not dire results of non-payment).
  - f) Be sure any humor you use makes a point without irritation or distraction from the seriousness of the credit obligation.
  - g) Avoid (1) accusations, (2) apologies for requesting payment, and—except in the reminder and inquiry stages—(3) excuses invented for the reader. Let him find his own—including, at all stages, any fault he may think he finds in the goods or billing.
  - h) Increase the force of your request with more credit and collection talk and less resale or (in early letters to good customers) sales-promotion material.
    - i) To decrease stringency, reverse h.
3. For persuasiveness (after the first two collection stages),
  - a) You have to stress what the reader gains by doing as you ask, not your desires.
  - b) Remember the effectiveness of a central theme—a unified, fully developed point—as opposed to scattered shots scantly treated.
  - c) Select an appeal appropriate to the circumstances and reader.
  - d) Any kind of antagonizing works against you, makes persuasion harder.
  - e) Individualize your message for greater effectiveness. Even though you use a form for economy, selected form paragraphs and fill-ins can make it seem to be for the one reader.

### **Collection Letter Check List (Continued)**

4. Guard against the legal dangers.
  - a) Reporting the delinquent to anybody except those employed to help collect or those who request the information because of an interest to protect (like credit associations) is dangerous.
  - b) Don't threaten physical violence, blackmail, or extortion.
  - c) Be sure of your facts and show no malice.
  - d) Be sure (by sealing and marking "Personal" when necessary) that only the debtor will read your efforts to collect overdue accounts.
5. Adapt your drive for action to the stage of the collection procedure.
  - a) A full-fledged action paragraph is too forceful and stinging in early stages.
  - b) But in the appeal and later stages, anything short of the full action ending—making clear what to do and how to do it, making action easy, and showing a benefit of immediate action—is too weak.

### Data-Sheet Check List

A data sheet is designed to sell you to a prospective employer. It can accompany either a prospecting or an invited application letter—and often is used to start off an interview under favorable circumstances. It tells your complete story, thus enabling your letter to be shorter than it could otherwise be and to concentrate on showing how the high spots of your training enable you to do good work for the firm.

1. Give it a heading, and introduce a photograph and address(es) quickly.
  - a) Identify your name, the purpose, the type of work desired, and (preferably) the company to which the application is addressed.
  - b) Be sure you apply for work, not for a job title.
  - c) Make every word count. Phraseology such as "data sheet of" and "position as" are wordy. Besides, they shift the viewpoint of your presentation away from *work*. "Travis Brannon's Preparation for Public Relations Work with Gulf States Paper, Inc." is a good heading. If Brannon has some good experience to emphasize, he might phrase it "training and experience"; he might even write, as some aggressively sales-minded applicants do, ". . . for effective public relations" (or *efficient* or *productive* or *aggressive*, whatever favorable adjective might apply). But carefully adapt the degree of aggressiveness to that expected in the job. Too much is out of place in the application of an engineer, accountant, or teacher; too little is more dangerous for a salesman, advertising man, or business manager.
  - d) Incorporate your address(es) in the minimum of space.
  - e) Some employers want a small photograph. (You can use the space to the side(s) for address(es) and phone number(s).) If you send one, be sure it is easily detachable.
2. Emphasis, ease of reading, and space saving are the main factors affecting the physical arrangement.
  - a) Balance the material across the page in tabulated form. Instead of one tall, thin column, you can often use 2—or 3 if your lines are short. (Leave ample white space around parts.)
  - b) If you have to carry over an item to a second line, indent the second line.
  - c) Centered heads carry more emphasis and balance the sheet better.
  - d) Numbering captions or items is unnecessary.
  - e) Capitalize the main words in centered heads. Underlining captions helps to make them stand out (and if you use side captions, underlining helps to keep them from getting lost).
  - f) Remember to identify the second page ("Preparation of Travis Brannon, page 2"—either centered or blocked, with 4 spaces after; then the reader sees at a glance that it is merely an identification, not a part of the coverage).
  - g) Difference in type and placement affects emphasis and shows that you are aware of organization principles.
3. Lead with that phase of your background which best prepares you for the particular job sought. If specialized (college) training sells you

**Data-Sheet Check List (Continued)**

best, make it your first major section. If you've had enough related experience, that may be your best lead. Personal details rarely are important enough to warrant putting them at the top (except possibly for stevedores and chorus girls, who don't write application letters), even though many company forms put them there.

4. Training details should point up specific preparation.
  - a) In your training section highlight those courses which distinctively qualify you for this job. A listing of everything you've studied takes away emphasis from the significant ones. (It also suggests your inability to discriminate between what is and what is not pertinent.) If you find yourself wanting to list a dozen or more, consider setting up a second section which you clearly label "supplementary" or "business-building" courses, as differentiated from the ones specifically preparing you for the job.
  - b) Give courses titles which describe the real content of the course. (If you get stuck, consult your college catalogue—though those descriptions are usually more formal and general than you'll want yours to be.) Above all, do not list mechanically with numbers or hours of credit; Marketing 6 means nothing to most readers, and 3 semester hours of credit has widely varying value.
  - c) In a description, give specific details of what you did in courses (as well as in activities and on jobs)—especially if the title doesn't make clear what you've learned.
  - d) But if the course description establishes no more than the title does, omit the description. It's wordy and dull to write "Principles of Accounting—a study of fundamentals."
  - e) Grades (about which most employers want to know) and honors may be interpreted as evidence of achievement. You can incorporate grade information easily—and with appropriate emphasis—in a caption which applies to your specialized field. Give a grade-average indication in some form which any reader will interpret accurately: letter or standing in quartiles or even percentages. Number systems, however, are confusing, because they are applied so differently at various schools; for example, a 1.5 at Alabama is average; at Texas it will earn you a Beta Gamma Sigma key; at Illinois you'd be flunking out of school.
  - f) Such expressions as "theoretical" education needlessly deprecate your work (and retard your own confident thinking).
  - g) Establish your graduation (or the completion of your training) early in the training section: kind of degree, field of specialization, school at which earned, and when. For college graduates, date of graduation usually establishes availability date.
  - h) Arrange courses in order of relative significance or applicability to the job.
5. Experience: remember that all is good; some is just better than other.
  - a) Give complete data about the work experience you list—whether it is in the business world, civic/social organizations, collegiate ac-

**Data-Sheet Check List (Continued)**

tivities, or military service. Give an exact job title (if you didn't have one, phrase a descriptive one), the firm/organization for which the work was done, the place, and the specific dates (this absorbs length of service). If the title doesn't make clear what you did, explain your duties to show what you learned to do.

- b) If experience is part time, identify it as such. Otherwise, you may arouse suspicion by apparently claiming to have been two places at once or working at two full-time activities.
  - c) You do want the chronology of your life's activities to be accounted for. Any employer looks with suspicion on an unexplained, unaccounted-for year or more beyond the high-school level. But until you have amassed a record of work experience showing cumulative progress toward a particular goal (the job being applied for), you'll probably present a stronger picture of yourself by giving details in their relative order of importance to the particular job sought rather than in the order in which they occurred in your life.
6. The personal-details section should present a clear, true picture of the kind of person you are.
- a) It ordinarily includes physical indications (age, height, weight, general coloring, general condition of health) in addition to geographical and racial origins, religious membership (or preference or affiliation), and marital status. They aren't especially significant, but most personnel people expect to see them. Their presence is taken for granted; their absence arouses suspicion. (Though law may prevent employers from asking, no law prohibits you from volunteering information about race and religion.)
  - b) Try combining ideas to reduce overlisting in this section. For instance,
- Birth (or Origin): Born in Birmingham, Alabama, June 21, 1947, of Scotch-Irish parents
- eliminates the tedious listing of
- Birth place: Birmingham, Alabama  
Birth date: June 21, 1947  
Age: (as if anyone couldn't figure this out!)  
Extraction: Scotch-Irish
- c) Organizational memberships (in which you might include your religious affiliation) are an indication of the kind of person you are. If you've taken part in a variety of extracurricular activities, consider making them a separate section shaped to show leadership, adaptability, or some other desirable characteristic—**AND THIS ADVICE IS ESPECIALLY PERTINENT IF YOU HAVE LITTLE EXPERIENCE.** If they are few in number, include them in the personal-details section.
  - d) Indicate leisure-time activities (hobbies); they supplement the basic idea of your personality. (Most people are discharged for personality maladjustments, not job inefficiency, you know.)

**Data-Sheet Check List (Continued)**

- e) Keep opinions off the data sheet; let concrete details of activities and memberships establish the assumption. Otherwise, leave these for the letter or even the interview.
- 7. References ordinarily conclude data-sheet presentation (unless there is some reason for a "blind" situation).
  - a) Give the *names, official titles, and official mailing addresses* (complete and accurate in each instance) of references for important jobs and fields of study listed: those men or women who've supervised you on jobs, those professors who've taught you the college work emphasized. The omission of either class arouses suspicion in an application from an individual just out of school.
  - b) *Always* give them titles of respect: Mr., Professor, Dr., Honorable—whatever is appropriate.
  - c) Unless character references are requested, omit them. (In a prospecting application, you'd never need them; in an invited letter, you might.)
  - d) The reason for your listing a reference should be obvious from some detail of your training or experience. If not, make clear with some identifying label.
- 8. Remember these points about style:
  - a) Data sheets are usually impersonal presentations. First- and second-person pronouns (*I, me, mine, you, yours, we, us*) are therefore out of place; and verbs without subjects or headless verbs are hard to read.
  - b) Noun phrases are the best choice of grammatical pattern.
  - c) A data sheet is ordinarily a *tabulation* (because a writer can get more information in less space that way and a reader can read more rapidly, yet receive the information with the emphasis the writer intends). The solid paragraphs of a letter are out of place. Normally, use no complete sentences.
  - d) Items in any list should be in parallel form. (See **Para.**)

### Prospecting Application Check List

(The prospecting application usually accompanies a data sheet but may be sent alone to get a show of interest before the writer sends complete details.)

1. Like a sales letter, the prospecting application must generate high interest from the start.
  - a) You can *always* summarize your central selling point of training or experience or a combination of both, and phrase it in terms of doing something for your reader. You can also attract favorable attention by citing some evidence of your research on the company or the field. A human-interest story may be useful, but it postpones the real message.
  - b) In focusing on the reader's needs, try to avoid the preaching or didactic, flat statement. What you cite may be fact (picked up from a periodical or the company's annual report), but if it is commonplace to your reader, it kills rather than generates interest.
  - c) The implication that you are a know-it-all or that your own up-to-date techniques are better than those in his present setup will rankle. Above all, avoid appearing to be telling this reader how to run his business.
  - d) Make clear early in the letter that you are seeking work of a specialized nature. Applying for just any job the reader might have weakens your case.
  - e) For a realistic approach, talk *work* and *doing*; you may give the impression of having your head in the clouds with talk of "forming an association"—even *position* and *application*.
  - f) Even though your idea establishes your preparation and links it with something the reader needs done, you need verve and vigor. Guard especially against the stereotyped "Please consider my application . . .," "I should like to apply for . . .," or any of their variants.
  - g) All through the letter, but especially in the beginning, shape your presentation so that biography (chronology) does not drown out what you can do *now*.
  - h) Preferably in the first paragraph, but no later than in the second, establish your qualifications.
  - i) Mere graduation is a poor lead anywhere and especially in the opening.
  - j) Eliminate selfish-sounding statements or even overtones of them.
  - k) Don't give this reader an opportunity to shut you off. In too many cases to run the risk, you'll encourage a "No" in answer to "Are you looking for?" or "Are you interested in?"
2. Interpretation and tone are important from the start.
  - a) You can maintain a consistent tone, neither apologizing for what you don't have nor bragging about what you do, if you back up your claims.
  - b) Throughout the letter, then, for conviction, back up your assertions of ability with specific points of training or experience.

**Prospecting Application Check List (Continued)**

- c) Generalizing and editorializing are out of place: "invaluable," "more than qualified," even "excellent."
  - d) On the other hand, you are needlessly deprecating your good qualifications with statements like "Although I have never worked in the field . . ." and "My only training is. . . ."
  - e) The most persuasive interpretation projects this training or experience right to the job to be done for the reader.
  - f) Use enough first-person pronouns for conversational naturalness. But avoid a succession of I-me-my beginnings. The monotony of structure and the selfish implications hinder your cause.
  - g) Show the research and thought which have gone into this project. Address the letter to the appropriate individual with his accurate title, if at all possible. Within the letter talk about company operations and trends in the industry. Even a deft, tactful reference to a competitor can be a point in your favor. Your treatment needs enough talk about the company to prove your interest in it and your knowledge of the field.
3. Your training and experience are your conviction elements.
- a) Talk about your experience, schooling, or personal characteristics in terms of accomplishing something on a job or in a course. You can show accomplishment by good verb choices. For example, you may *register for*, *take*, *attend*, *study*, *receive credit for*, *pass*, *learn*, or *master* a course; each denotes a degree of achievement.
  - b) The emphasis of a lead should go on a phase of work connected with the job you're applying for rather than on a course or courses . . . or even graduation or the degree.
  - c) Refer to training as work preparation (in lower-case letters) rather than courses (in capitals and lowers).
  - d) You need highlights rather than detailed coverage in the letter.
  - e) But even highlights require specific, concrete detail for conviction.
  - f) Your data sheet supplies the thorough coverage in most cases. (If you don't send one, you probably should offer to.) Refer to the data sheet incidentally in a sentence establishing some other significant idea *after* stating your case and *just before* asking the reader to take action.
  - g) Don't divert attention to the data sheet too soon.
4. Your personality should be reflected.
- a) Refer to the more significant personal characteristics affecting job performance with the assurance that you have them and preferably with the concrete evidence that you do.
  - b) Incorporate phrases which reveal your attitude toward work and your understanding of working conditions.
5. Ask for appropriate action in the close.
- a) Name as specifically as possible the exact action you want this reader to take. And make it plausible under the circumstances.
  - b) For appropriate tone, don't beg and don't command. And avoid the aloof, condescending implications of "You may call me at. . . ."

**Prospecting Application Check List (Continued)**

*Just ask.*

- c) Eliminate references to *application, interview, position*. Use action references to *work* and the necessary steps in job-getting (for example, observe the difference between the phrase *talk with* and *talk to*).
- d) Clearly imply or state that you will be grateful. If he grants your request, he will do you a favor, remember. Remember, too, that "Thank you for . . ." in present tense may sound presumptuous.
- e) Isn't it pointless to remind the reader in any way of his option not to see you? "Just write me at one of the addresses on the enclosed data sheet if you can conveniently see me June 25 or 26" relieves the reader of even replying! "Will you write me that . . ." establishes quite a different meaning.
- f) A little sales whip-back at the end will help strengthen the impression of what you can contribute.

### **Modification for Writing Invited Applications**

6. When writing an application in response to an ad or the suggestion of an agency or friend:
  - a) Primary emphasis should go on putting your preparation to work for the reader. But since your reference to the source is an automatic way of securing attention, you should identify it early.
  - b) You don't put yourself in a favorable light when you state an obvious inference from the situation itself ("I read your ad" or "In looking through yesterday's *News*, I came across your ad").
  - c) Don't ask questions or phrase assumptions which are clear push-overs. "If you are seeking, x, y, and z . . . , then I'm your man." "Are you looking for an employee with x, y, and z? I have x, y, and z."
  - d) Postpone salary talk until the interview if you can. If the source specifically names a figure, the assumption is clear that the figure is acceptable when you send your application. If the phrase "State salary required" is included in the description, your reply of "your going rate" or "your usual wage scale" is acceptable to any firm you'd want to work for.

# Appendix C. Letters and the Law\*

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BECAUSE the laws of the fifty states and the federal government vary somewhat and are continually changing, the specific details of the law as applied to letters are too voluminous to treat here—and generalizations are dangerous. Yet enough similarity exists on certain points to justify the following statements of special significance to letter writers.

## Responsibility and Rights of Possession and Publication

The law of responsibility for a letter is fairly clear. The first name after the body of the letter is responsible. The writer's name alone at the end makes him responsible, whether on plain paper or on a company letterhead. The letterhead makes no difference. Cincinnati Lawyer Leo T. Parker says, in "Prepare to Win Lawsuits Involving Correspondence," *Industrial Marketing*, 32:37-38, 150, February, 1947: "Review of late and leading higher court decisions discloses that one requirement for an employee's relief from personal liability on letters and contracts he signs with proper authority of the employer is the employer's name precedes the agent's signature."

If the letter is about company business which the writer is authorized to handle as the company's agent, and he signs with his title, he is responsible; but he can in turn pass that responsibility on to the company under his agency agreement.

To avoid this two-step process of putting responsibility where it belongs, he can type the company name (preferably in solid capitals) a double space below the complimentary close and a quadruple space above his typed name and title, with his signature in the large space. This arrangement makes the company directly responsible for company business which a writer is authorized to handle—but, of course, not for the writer's personal business or unauthorized company business.

Because the company name defeats some of the attempts of salesmen to set up a feeling of personal relationship between themselves

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and their prospects, they often sign their letters without the company name. Conversely, putting in the company name may give the reader an additional feeling of security in dealing with an established company instead of the individual who signs the letter. The end legal effect is the same.

Regardless of who is responsible for a letter, he retains publication rights to it. The addressee who receives it has every right to keep it; but, without the consent of the responsible sender, he does not have the right to publish it in an article or book.

### Legal Aspects of Buying and Selling by Mail

In writing sales-promotion letters, inquiries and replies about goods and services for sale, orders, and acknowledgments of orders, writers need to keep in mind what constitutes a *contract*—to be sure of forming one when desired and otherwise avoiding one.

When buyer and seller agree on a legally enforceable arrangement calling for one to act in certain ways in return for the other's acting as specified, we say they form a *contract*.

The required actions must be legal. They cannot make a contract to rob a bank or kill somebody, for example.

The phrase "in return for" means that an exchange of value—"consideration," the lawyers call it—is necessarily stated or implied. Hence many contracts which might otherwise leave a question include a phrase something like "for \$1 and other valuable consideration."

And there must be agreement, or, as it is sometimes stated, "a meeting of the minds." If the terms are indefinite, unclear, or misunderstood, no contract is formed. The basic elements, then, are an *offer* and an *acceptance*.

An *offer* must be reasonably definite to provide agreement. In general, it needs to be fairly clear by explicit statement or reasonable implication in answer to Who, What, When, Where, and Why. That is, the two or more parties involved must be clear. What each agrees to do, or refrain from doing, has to be specific. In terms of goods for sale, not only the general class of goods but a fairly clear understanding of the quality, price, and number is necessary. The time the offer goes into effect and ends must be reasonably clear, by explicit statement or by implication. Where the actions are to take place is also often necessary to a valid contract. The consideration is the answer to Why.

A catalogue listing, advertisement, or sales-promotion letter is not ordinarily an offer to sell because it is usually not specific enough to answer adequately the five *W* questions. Though it may identify the prospective seller and describe the goods and give the price, it ordinarily does not indicate the number of items (another part of

What), and the When and Where may not be clear enough. Simply quoting prices is not an offer.

Certainly most inquiries about products for sale do not complete contracts, both because the cataloguing or advertising of the goods was not a specific offer to sell and the inquiry is usually not an acceptance, or even an offer to buy. Hence even a specific order for goods does not usually complete a contract. More likely it has to be considered the offer, which the seller can accept or reject.

An offer by mail becomes effective when received and stands to the end of any stated time or until withdrawn, rejected, or accepted—or for a reasonable time in view of the nature of the product and the circumstances. In the absence of any statement about the duration of the offer or the amount available, an offer to sell fresh fruit at the orchard, for example, would probably last only so long as the supply lasts; but an offer to sell the orchard would last considerably longer. An offer can be withdrawn any time before acceptance, but the withdrawal has to be received to become effective.

Assuming that a valid offer has been made by mail, a letter accepting it must agree to all the terms exactly, or else it forms no contract. Thus a simple acknowledgment of receipt of an order does not complete a contract. The acknowledgment must adequately identify the order and agree to act as the offer (order) specifies. Any change in terms *required* by the receiver of an offer rejects the original offer and makes a counteroffer. The original offerer can then reject it or, to form a contract, accept it. A proposal to buy half a farm offered for sale is not an acceptance but a counteroffer. That does not mean, however, that the receiver of an offer cannot accept its terms exactly and then ask for modifications—prices, delivery schedules, quality, or the like. He forms a contract by accepting the original terms. If the original offerer agrees to the requested change, the original contract is rescinded and a new one substituted by mutual consent.

Until recently, unless the offerer had said that the contract depended on his receiving the acceptance, a properly addressed and stamped acceptance of a mailed offer became effective when posted. Thus it could not be rescinded without mutual consent, even if a message attempting to rescind arrived before the mailed acceptance. The assumption was that the letter was beyond the control of the acceptor. Postal Regulations providing for the recovery of a mailed letter now make that assumption and the law doubtful. Because of that possibility, revocation of an acceptance by other means may also be possible; but, in general, an acceptance is effective when mailed.

*Warranties* are closely related to contracts, in that a buyer can bring civil suit to recover for nonperformance, or to force performance, on the basis of either stated or implied warranties. Of course, any stated warranty is a part of the contract. But, in the absence of

any statement to the contrary, a seller warrants by implication that he has clear title to the product sold and that it will perform the usual functions for which such products are sold. To avoid these implied warranties, a seller must be very specific; a general statement that no warranties apply if not stated does not absolve him of responsibility. For that reason, detailed denials of warranty often appear on the containers of such things as insecticides. Furthermore, if an orderer specifies the use he intends to make of a product, leaving the seller to send the appropriate thing, the seller sending the product implies warranty that the product is suitable for the specified purpose. For example, if a farmer orders a pump and says he wants it to pump water for his stock from his 100-foot well, he has a legal claim against the seller who sends a shallow-well pump; a shallow-well pump will not bring water up from that depth.

*Fraud* in selling by mail—intentional misrepresentation of a product to the buyer for the purpose of inducing him to buy—not only subjects the seller to civil suit by the injured buyer to recover damages sustained; it also opens the possibility of criminal prosecution by the state (and by the Post Office for use of the mails to defraud).

### The Law of Exchanging Information

Any contractual relationship in connection with the sale of goods used to be between the buyer and the seller. Therefore, information that a manufacturer distributed about his goods to consumers who bought from retailers was not a matter of contract. Thus the injured consumer had no recourse against the manufacturer in terms of contract law. Today, however, this privity of contract has been abandoned in cases about food and drugs; and it is often circumvented in other cases where most of the information about a product as inducement to purchase comes from the manufacturer directly to the consumer. The reasoning is that the dealer is the manufacturer's agent in this special sense or that the consumer is a third-party beneficiary of the manufacturer-dealer contract or that the warranty runs with the goods.

If the manufacturer intentionally misleads the consumer, however, the consumer always could and still can recover any damages in *tort* law on the basis of deceit or fraud.

Similarly, a person seeking information about other persons (credit or job applicants, for example) may sustain *tort* action for damages against an informer who intentionally or carelessly misleads him to his detriment. The informer is obligated to the inquirer to take reasonable precautions for accuracy of information and to avoid intentional deceit.

A letter writer who gives information about one person to other

persons also has obligations to the state and to the person who is the subject of the report. Failure to meet the obligations subjects the informer to possible charges of *libel*—publication of defamatory statements about another person which damage that person by hurting his reputation. “Publication” in this special sense means merely giving the damaging statements to one or more other persons, or negligently allowing other persons to see them. For this reason, duns for past-due accounts and letters conveying unfavorable information about people should be sent only in sealed envelopes and addressed so that they are seen only by the debtors and other people specially privileged (as explained later).

The state assumes that the informer will be fair-minded (show good faith rather than malicious intent). Hence good faith is usually a complete defense against criminal libel charges, though truth is not if malice is present. Both good faith and truth always provide complete defense.

Civil libel suit brought by the injured person for damages to his business or profession, however, is different. The informer is obligated to tell the truth. In most legal jurisdictions truth is a complete defense against civil libel suit for damages, no matter how damaging or malicious the information may be. Where it is not, truth and absence of malicious intent are, though good faith alone is not.

Apparently for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of important business information, the law gives an informer considerable benefit of doubt and applies the principle of *privilege*. That is, a writer sending *requested* information in good faith to someone for the purpose of helping him to protect an interest (a prospective employer or creditor, for example, who could suffer considerable loss if he deals with an unworthy man) is said to be *privileged*. The information need not be absolutely true, provided that the writer has been reasonably careful to get the facts, for the privileged informer to be invulnerable to civil libel suit. One who requests information about a third party normally expects the informer to answer “to the best of your knowledge” and to include some opinion. If the informer volunteers the information, is reckless with the truth, or shows malice, however, he loses privilege as a defense.

Similarly, credit organizations that provide information about credit risks to members immediately faced with credit applications are probably protected by privilege; but if an organization distributes the information to all members, including those without immediate need or request for it, and thus forms a kind of black list, privilege probably does not apply.

A letter writer requesting personal information should show that he has an interest to protect and promise to keep the information confidential except for the particular use—to help the informer pro-

tect himself against libel suit. The informer should show that the information is requested, be reasonably careful to tell the truth and avoid any malice, and ask that the information be confidential.

In collection letters, for example, a writer disgusted with a troublesome debtor may maliciously try to get even with the debtor by making true but damaging statements about him to others who have no interest to protect. He thus provides the basis for criminal libel charges. If some of the statements are also untrue, he also throws himself open to civil libel suit for damages—without benefit of privilege because the information is going to people who have not requested it to protect an interest.

### Motivation by Extortion

Also in collection letters—and others trying to induce a reader to act in a certain way—writers sometimes resort to threats not in due process of law to force the desired action beneficial to themselves. In so doing, they become guilty of *extortion*, a criminal offense in all state and federal jurisdictions. The due process of law for enforcing a contract (including the payment of contracted debts) is civil suit. If a writer threatens that, he is on safe legal ground, though he may lose the reader's good will; but if he threatens physical violence ("I'll beat you up") or criminal charges ("I'll report you for income tax evasion"), he is going beyond due process and is subject to criminal prosecution for extortion.

The same threatening letters—if they wilfully use abusive language to incite fear, confusion, or humiliation—also subject the senders to civil liability in tort law. The older cases usually allowed recovery only where physical harm resulted, but recent cases are supporting recovery where there is substantial mental anguish and emotional disturbance without actual physical infirmity.



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